

THE ODYSSEY

THE ODYSSEY
OF
HOMER

TRANSLATED BY
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TO
E. M. M.

PREFACE

THIS translation is published in India in the hope of attracting Indian readers to a noble poem which many Englishmen feel to be their inheritance as truly as many Indians feel the Ramayana to be theirs.

Many people have written about translating Homer; and some of them have disparaged blank verse as a medium of translation. But its defenders may reply that it sacrifices no more than any other form of verse. The most elaborate English metres can never reproduce nor compensate for the music of Homer's polysyllables: and if the blank verse line misses his qualities of simplicity, dignity and directness, that is at all events not the fault of the instrument. Some people doubt whether blank verse can ever approach Homer's pace. The best hope seems to be in giving the line a trochaic movement, varying the pauses, and not sparing elisions and double endings.

This version aims at conciseness: the number of lines exceeds the Greek by one-fifth, the ratio in which the hexameter is longer than the five-foot English line.

W.S.M.

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THE CHARACTERS OF THE ODYSSEY

THE poem tells the story of ODYSSEUS, king of Ithaca; how he suffers misfortunes on his return from the Trojan war, and how he reaches his home after twenty years, and slays the suitors, who are courting his faithful wife PENELOPE, oppressing his son TELEMACHIUS, and devouring his substance. Odysseus' mother, ANTICLEIA, has died in his absence; his father LAERTES survives in grief and solitude to welcome back his son.

The gods who figure in the story are ZEUS, king of heaven, also called CRONION (son of Cronos); PALLAS ATHENE, goddess of wisdom, friendly to Odysseus; POSEIDON, god of sea and earthquake, hostile to Odysseus; HERMES, the messenger of heaven; HELIOS, the sun-god; and HADES, god of death. ARTEMIS is goddess of the chase; APHRODITE of love; AMPHITRITE is a sea-goddess. APOLLO is the god of the bow. CIRCE is a goddess of magic arts; CALYPSO is an island-goddess who detains Odysseus against his will; and the CYCLOPS is a one-eyed cannibal monster.

Chief among the heroes who fought beside Odysseus at Troy are AGAMEMNON, also called ATRIDES (son of Atreus); MENELAUS, his brother, likewise called ATRIDES, husband of HELEN, fairest of women, whose abduction

caused the Trojan war; and NESTOR, the wise old king of Pylos. These reached home safe, but Agamemnon on coming home was murdered by his false wife CLYTEMNESTRA, and her lover ÆGISTHUS. Heroes who died either at Troy or on their way back are ACHILLES, also called PELIDES (son of Peleus), AIAS, PATROCLUS and ANTILOCHUS.

The scene is laid partly in Phæacia, where ALCINOUS is king and ARETE is queen. NAUSICAA is their daughter.

The chief men among Penelope's suitors are ANTINOUS, EURYMACHUS, AMPHINOMUS and AGELAUS.

The servants loyal to Odysseus are EUMÆUS the swineherd, PHILÆTIUS the herdsman, MEDON the herald, EURYCLEIA the old nurse, and EURYNOME the stewardess. MELANTHIUS the goatherd and MELANTHO, one of the maid servants, are disloyal.

ERRATA

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|-------------------|--|--|
| p. 13, line 13 : | <i>for</i> eternize | <i>read</i> eternize |
| p. 16, line 2 : | <i>for</i> Not | <i>read</i> Nor |
| p. 35, line 25 : | <i>for</i> Thou hast <i>for</i> ye have | <i>read</i> Ye have <i>read</i> thou hast |
| p. 91, line 15 : | <i>for</i> know | <i>read</i> knows |
| p. 96 line 8 : | <i>for</i> forbode | <i>read</i> forebode |
| p. 109, line 11 : | <i>for</i> o'erhaul | <i>read</i> overhaul |
| p. 128, line 5 : | <i>for</i> Tectorn | <i>read</i> Tecton |
| p. 199, line 10 : | <i>for</i> Epeus | <i>read</i> Epeius |
| p. 202, line 7 : | <i>for</i> Hera's | <i>read</i> Here's |
| p. 206, line 5 : | <i>for</i> on one | <i>read</i> on the one |
| p. 260, line 4 : | <i>for</i> Hera's | <i>read</i> Here's |
| p. 262, line 20 : | <i>for</i> Hera's | <i>read</i> Here's |
| p. 395, line 3 : | <i>for</i> Amphimedon | <i>read</i> Amphimedon |

BOOK I

Tell me, O Muse, of that Great Traveller
Who wandered far and wide when he had sacked
The sacred town of Troy. Of many men
He saw the cities and he learned the mind ;
Ay, and at heart he suffered many woes
Upon the sea, intent to save his life
And bring his comrades home. Yet even so
His men he could not save for all his efforts,
For through their own blind wilfulness they perished ;
The fools ! who ate up Hyperion's kine ;
And he bereft them of their homing day.
Touching these things, beginning where thou wilt,
Tell even us, O goddess, child of Zeus.

Now all the rest, as many as escaped
The plunge to death, were safe from war and wave
At home : Odysseus only, hungering
For wife and home, the queenly nymph Calypso
Kept, that bright goddess, in her hollow caves,
Desiring him for mate. But when the year
Came with the circling of the seasons, when
The gods had so ordained that he should come
Home unto Ithaca, not even there
Among his own folk, was he quit of toils.
And all the gods felt pity for him, save
Poseidon, who unceasing raged against
Godlike Odysseus, till he reached his home.

Howbeit Poseidon had gone off to visit
The distant Ethiopians (now they dwell,

Those Ethiopians, in twain divided,
Some by the sunset, others by the dawn,
The uttermost of men) there to receive
His hecatomb of bulls and rams from them.
There made he merry sitting at the feast ;
But in the dwelling of Olympian Zeus
The other gods were gathered ; and the Father
Of gods and men began to speak among them.
For he was thinking of superb Ægisthus,
Whom famed Orestes, Agamemnon's son,
Had slain ; and having him in mind, he spake
Among the immortals :

‘ Look ye, how apt are men to blame the gods !
It is from us, they say, that evils come,
Whereas through their blind folly they themselves
Have miseries beyond what was ordained.
So even now, beyond what was ordained,
Ægisthus took to him the wedded wife
Of Atreus' son, and when her lord came home,
Slew him, though well he knew it meant sheer death ;
Since we betimes had sent our word to him
By Hermes, keen-eyed Argus-slayer, thus :
“ Thou must not kill the man nor woo his wife :
Since from Orestes' hand, once he has won
To man's estate and longs for his own land,
Shall the avenging of Atrides come.”
So Hermes spoke, but yet could not persuade,
For all his good intent, Ægisthus' heart :
Well, now hath he paid the full price of all !’

Athene, keen-eyed goddess, answered him :
‘ O Father of us all, Cronion, lord
Above all lords, in sooth that man lies low
In death that is his due ! So perish also
Whoever else may dare such deeds as he !
Howbeit my heart is torn for wise Odysseus,

That luckless man, who far from all his friends
Has long been suffering in a sea-girt island,
The navel of the sea, a wooded isle,
Wherein a goddess hath her dwelling, daughter
Of Atlas, that dark mind, who knows the depths
Of every sea ; yea, and himself upholds
The lofty pillars that keep earth and sky
Apart. His daughter is it who detains
That wretched, sorrowing man, and all the time
With soft and wheedling words she coaxes him
To think no more of Ithaca. But he
Longing to see, yea, but the smoke leap up
From his own land, desires to die. And yet
Thy heart, Olympian, heeds it not a whit !
Did not Odysseus, by the Argive ships
In the broad land of Troy, make sacrifice
To thee unstintingly ? Why then, O Zeus,
Wert thou so wroth with him ?'

Then Zeus, who rolls the clouds, replied to her :
' My child, what word is this that hath escaped
The barrier of thy teeth ? Why, how should I
Forget divine Odysseus, who in wisdom
Excelleth all men, and above them all
Hath offered sacrifice to the immortal gods
Who keep wide heaven ? Nay, but it is Poseidon,
Who girdles earth, that hath for ever been
Implacably enraged against Odysseus,
By reason of the Cyclops, whom he blinded
Of his one eye, the godlike Polyphemus,
Who is the mightiest of the Cyclops' tribe.
His mother was the nymph Thoösa, child
Of Phorcys, lord of the unresting sea ;
Who lay with the sea-god in the deep caves.
From that day on Poseidon, earthquake-lord,
Slays not indeed Odysseus, but pursues him

Far from his home. But come, let us all here
Take thought for his return, that he come home.
So shall Poseidon let his anger go,
For nowise will he have the might alone
To thwart and to oppose all the immortals.'

Athene, keen-eyed goddess, answered him :
' O Father of us all, Cronion, lord
Above all lords, if now this be indeed
The pleasure of the blessed gods, that he,
The wise Odysseus, should come home again,
Then let us quickly speed the herald Hermes,
Slayer of Argus, to the isle Ogygia,
That with all haste unto the fair-haired nymph
He may announce our will infallible,
The coming-home of patient-souled Odysseus,
So that indeed he come. But as for me,
I will to Ithaca ; that I may rouse
His son the more, and fortify his heart
To call a moot of the long-haired Achæans,
And speak his mind out unto all the suitors,
Who are for ever slaying his thick flocks
And rolling, shambling kine. And I will guide him
To Lacedæmon and to sandy Pylos,
To seek for news of his dear father's coming,
If haply he may hear of it, that so
He may be had in good report 'mid men.

So said she, and beneath her feet she bound
Her lovely golden sandals, deathless things,
Which used to bear her over the wet sea
And boundless land, swift as the breath of wind ;
And took her sturdy spear keen-tipped with bronze,
Wherewith she lays the ranks of heroes low,
When she, the daughter of a mighty sire,
Is wroth with them. Then with a sweep she sped
Down from Olympus' heights, and in the land

Of Ithaca, at Odysseus' outer gate,
On the court threshold-stone she took her stand.
Bronze spear in hand, to outward view she seemed
A stranger, Menſtes, leader of the Taphians.
And there she found the lordly suitors : they
Were at a game of draughts, before the doors,
Seated on hides of oxen they had slain ;
And of the heralds and the busy squires
Some were a-mixing bowls of wine and water,
And some again with porous sponges washing
The tables, and then laying them, and some
Were carving meat abundant.

Now far the first to see the stranger was
Godlike Telemachus, for with heavy heart
Among the suitors was he seated, dreaming
Of his good father, that he might appear
Perchance from somewhere, and send scattering
The suitors in the palace, and himself
Win honour and bear rule in his own house.
Thinking such thoughts and sitting with the suitors,
He saw Athene, and to the outer door
Went straight, for in his heart he thought it blame
That any guest should stand long at the gates.
So drawing near beside her, her right hand
He clasped, and took from her the spear of bronze,
And spake and said to her with wingéd words :
' Hail, stranger ! thou shalt find a welcome with us,
And afterwards, when thou hast tasted food,
Shalt tell us of whatever need thou hast.'

With that, he led the way ; Athene followed ;
And when they were inside the lofty house
He bore the spear and stood it up against
A lofty pillar in a polished rack,
Where there were standing many other spears
Of steadfast-souled Odysseus. And he brought her

And placed her on a goodly carven chair,
And spread beneath a linen cloth : below
There was a footstool. For himself close by
Her side he set an inlaid seat, apart
From all the suitors, lest the guest perturbed
By their uproar might not enjoy his meal
With overbearing people round about him,
And also that he might inquire of him
About his father who was gone away.
Then a maid brought them water for their hands,
And poured it from a fair gold ewer for washing
Above a silver basin ; and drew up
Near them a polished board ; and a grave dame
Brought and set bread and added many dainties,
Providing generously of what she had.
Then he that carved took up and set before them
Platters of divers meats and golden cups ;
And ever to and fro a herald walked
And served the wine to them.

Then came the lordly suitors in, and they
Sate down in rows on settles and high seats,
And heralds poured the water o'er their hands
While maids piled up for them the bread in baskets,
And pages filled the bowls brim-full of drink ;
So they put out their hands to the good fare
Lying before them ready. But when they
Had had their fill of meat and drink, they turned
To fresh amusements, even song and dance ;
For these things are the garland of a feast.
And then a herald put a handsome lyre
In Phemius' hands ; for willy-nilly he
Was minstrel to the suitors ; so he struck
The chords in prelude to his singing sweet.

But, lest the rest should hear, Telemachus
Bending his head close to keen-eyed Athene,

Said : ' Dear my guest, wilt thou be vexed with me
For what I say ? Yon men amuse themselves
With these things, lyre and song—and easily,
Seeing they eat the substance of another
Without requital, of a man whose bones
Maybe are rotting somewhere in the rain,
White on the shore, or tossed about the brine.
But should they see him back in Ithaca,
Then would they all be praying for speed of foot,
Rather than richer store of gold and raiment !
But, as it is, he by an evil doom
Hath perished, nor for us is any comfort,
No, not though any earthly man should say
That he will come again. Gone is the day
Of his returning ! But, come, tell me this,
And truly say : Who among men art thou,
And whence ? Thy town and parents, where be they ?
Say, in what kind of ship thou camest ; how
Did seamen bring thee here to Ithaca ?
Who said they that they were ? for ne'er by land
Methinks thou camest here. And one thing more
Tell me, that I may know : Art thou come now
For the first time, or as a household guest ?
For many strangers used to come here, since
My father too had travelled among men.'

Then the keen-eyed Athene answered him :
' Yea, I will tell thee frankly all these things.
Mentes, the son of wise Anchialus,
Do I avow me ; I bear rule among
The Taphians, lovers of the oar, and here
With ship and crew have I put in like this,
Upon my way across the wine-dark sea
To men of foreign speech, to Temessa
For copper, with a cargo of bright iron ;
And yonder lies my ship there by the farm-lands

In Rheithron's harbour under Neion's wood,
Far from the city. Friends of one another
I claim we are, as were our clans of yore.
Nay, if thou wilt, go ask old lord Laertes,
Who comes, they say, no longer to the city,
But bears his sorrows far off in the country,
With one old woman for his servant, who
Serves him with meat and drink, when weariness
Lays hold upon his limbs, the while he creeps
Along the hill-side of his vineyard plot.
Now am I come, because men said that he,
Thy father, was among his people. But
Still must the gods be thwarting his return :
For not yet hath he died, the good Odysseus,
On earth ; but living somewhere is detained
On the wide ocean, in a sea-girt island,
And he is in the hands of stubborn people,
Wild men, who haply hold him there perforce.
Nay, truly I will prophesy to thee
As the immortals put it in my heart,
And as I know it shall be brought to pass,
Although am I no soothsayer, nor skilled
In signs of birds. Not for much longer now
Shall he be absent from his dear home-land,
Though bonds of iron hold him. He will find
Some way to come ; rich in resource he is.
But come, declare me this, and tell me plainly :
Art thou, so tall, Odysseus' very son ?
Thy head and thy fine eyes are wondrous like his ;
For many a time have he and I forgathered,
Ere he embarked for Troy-land, whither went
The others, ay, the best of all the Argives
Aboard their hollow ships. Since that day neither
Have I beheld Odysseus, nor he me.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :

' Ay, sir, now plainly I will tell thee all.
My mother says I am his son, but I
Know not, for never yet did any man
Himself know his own getting. O that I
Had been the son of some man blest by fate,
Whom age o'ertook among his own belongings !
But now of him, who of all mortal men
Is most ill-fated, they do say that I
Am sprung, since thou dost question me of this.'

Then the keen-eyed Athene answered him :
' Why, then at least the gods appointed thee
No nameless lineage for the days to come,
Seeing thy mother was Penelope,
And thou so good a man ! But tell me this,
And plainly say : What feast, what rout is this ?
What hast thou with it ? Is it wedding-feast
Or drinking-bout ? I see it is no banquet,
Where each man brings his share. In such a fashion,
So flown with insolence, they seem to me
To revel through the hall. Well might a man
Be angry, watching all these shameful deeds,
If any man of sense should come among them !'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
' Stranger, since thou dost ask and question me
Of these things, once this house bade fair to be
Rich and in honour, while yon man was yet
At home. But now the gods of cruel purpose
Have willed it otherwise ; and made him pass
Clean out of sight, as never man before.
Not for his death would I be sorrowing thus,
Had he been slain amid his company
In Troy-land, or had died in the arms of friends,
When he had wound up all the skein of war !
Then had the whole Greek army made his tomb,
And for his son too had he won great fame

To come ; but now the spirits of the storm
Have swept him off and left no news of him.
Gone out of sight and hearsay ! But he hath
Left me lament and pain, and yet must I
Mourn and bewail not only him because
The gods have brought me other sore distresses.
For all the chiefs of the isles—Dulichium,
And Same, and Zacynthus of the woods—
And all who rule in rocky Ithaca,
These woo my mother and lay waste my house.
And she doth not refuse such hateful marriage
Nor yet can make an end ; and they with feasting
Devour my house and soon will break me too.'

Then stirred to wrath Pallas Athene said :
' To think of it ! thou hast sore need in truth
Of lost Odysseus, that he might lay hands
Upon the shameless suitors ! Would he might
Come now and stand at entry of the gate
With shield and helmet and a brace of spears,
As mighty as when first of all I saw him
Drinking and making merry in our house
On his way back from Ephyre, from Ilus,
The son of Mermerus ! for thither too
In his swift ship Odysseus went, to find
A deadly drug, that he might have wherewith
To smear his bronze-tipped arrows. Yet would Ilus
Not give it him, because he feared the gods
Who live for ever ; but my father gave it,
For they were wondrous friends. O might Odysseus
Come, as he then was, on the suitors now :
So should all find swift fate and bitter wedding !
Howbeit on the gods' knees lie these things,
Whether he come or take revenge, or not,
Within his halls ; but thee I bid take thought
How thou mayst thrust the suitors from the house.

Come now, give ear and hearken to my words.
To-morrow summon the Achæan chiefs
To the assembly, and declare thy speech
To all, and take the gods for witnesses.
And for the suitors, bid them scatter them
Each to his own ; and for thy mother, if
Her heart is moved to wed, let her return
Home to her mighty sire, and there her kin
Will furnish forth the wedding, and make ready
Right many gifts, ay, all that should attend
Upon a well-loved daughter. And to thee
Wise counsel will I give, if thou wilt hearken.
With twenty rowers man a ship, the best
Thou hast, and go thou forth to seek for tidings
Of thy long-absent father, if perchance
Any of mortal men may tell thee of him,
Or thou mayst hear a voice from Zeus, which often
Brings news to men. Get thee to Pylos first
And question goodly Nestor, and from him
To Sparta, and to fair-haired Menelaus,
For last was he of the mail-coated Greeks
To reach his home. And if maybe thou hear
Thy father is alive and coming home,
Why, then, for all this wasting, couldst thou last
For one year more. But if thou hear that he
Is dead and gone, then come back home again
And raise a mound to him, and over it
Pay funeral rites, full many, as is due :
And give thy mother to a husband. Then,
When thou hast done all this and made an end.
Take thought thereafter in thy mind and heart
How to destroy the suitors in thy halls,
By guile, or openly. For, since thou art
Of childish years no more, it fits thee not
To play the child. Or hast thou never heard

What glory among all men good Orestes
Won when he killed his father's murderer,
Subtle Ægisthus, who his great sire slew?
And thou too, friend—for very tall and comely
I see thou art—be thou a man of valour,
That e'en a man of men unborn may praise thee.
Now will I down to my swift ship and men,
Who must be grumbling as they wait for me.
But do thou heed and hearken to my words.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
'Thou speak'st indeed, sir, from a friendly heart,
Like father to his son ; and I will never
Forget thy words. But come, I pray thee, tarry .
For all thy haste to go, that having bathed
And satisfied thy heart thou mayst return
Rejoicing to thy ship, and take a gift,
Costly and very rare, to be an heirloom,
From me, such as good friends bestow on friends.'

Then the keen-eyed Athene answered him :
'Keep me no longer ; I am fain to go.
But whatsoever gift thy heart desires
To give me, give it me when I come back,
To carry home, and choose a right good one ;
And it shall bring thee in return its worth.'

With that the keen-eyed goddess went her way,
And shot up like a bird ; but in his heart
Courage and strength she put, and made him think
More of his father even than aforetime.
And when he understood he was astonished,
Deeming his guest a god. Then looking like
A god himself, he went unto the suitors.

For them the famous bard was singing, while
They sate in silence listening ; and he sang
The piteous returning of the Achæans
From Troy-land, which Athene laid on them.

And wise Penelope, Icarius' child,
Heard from her upper room his wondrous song,
And down the steep stair from her room she came
And not alone ; two maids attended her.
Now when that star of women reached the suitors,
By the main post of the strong roof she paused,
Holding her shining veil before her face ;
And on each side of her a faithful maid
Stood by. Then with a burst of tears she said
Unto the bard divine :
• 'Thou knowest, Phemius, many other tales
Wherewith to charm men—deeds of men and gods—
Which bards enternize. Sing them one of these,
Seated here by, and let them drink their wine
In silence ; but forgo this woful song
That ever wastes the heart within my breast,
Since there hath come on me, above all women,
Distress without remede ; so dear a head
Do I lament for ever with remembrance,
Even my lord's, whose fame has gone afield
Through Hellas and mid Argos.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
'Mother o' mine, why grudge the trusty minstrel
To please us even as his heart is moved ?
'Tis not the bards who are to blame, but Zeus
Who gives to men that live by bread, to each
Just as he pleases. It is no reproach
To this man, that he sings the evil doom
Of the Danaï ; for men praise the most
That song which comes the newest to their ears.
So do thou brace thy heart and soul to listen ;
For not alone Odysseus lost in Troy
The day of his return, but many others
Perished as well. But get thee to thy chamber,
And mind thine own concerns, the loom and spindle,

And bid thy maidens ply their tasks. But speech
Shall be the part for men—for all, but most
For me—since I am master in the house.’

Back to her room as one amazed she went,
For to her heart she laid her son’s wise words.
And to the upper chamber with her maids
She climbed, and there lamented her sweet lord
Odysseus, till keen-eyed Athene shed
Sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

But through the shadowy halls the suitors clamoured,
And prayed each one to be her bedfellow.
But wise Telemachus spake first among them :

‘ O ye of overweening insolence
Who court my mother, now let us enjoy
The feast and have no brawling ; since it is
A pleasant thing to listen to a singer
Such as is this man, like the gods in voice.
But in the morning let us meet in moot,
All in their places, that I may declare
My word to you outright—to quit these halls.
Make ready other feasts ; eat up your own
Possessions, gadding round from house to house ;
But if ye think it likelier and better
That one man’s goods be spoiled without atonement,
Then waste ye them ! but I will call upon
The everlasting gods, if haply Zeus
May grant that deeds of recompense be wrought.
Then in this hall should ye die unavenged.’

So said he, and all bit their lips and marvelled
To hear Telemachus, so bold he spake.

Antinous then, Eupèithes’ son, replied :
‘ Telemachus, in sooth the gods themselves
Are training thee to wag thy tongue so loud
And talk so boldy ! May Cronion never
Make thee a king in sea-girt Ithaca,

Which thing^g is of inheritance thy right ! '

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Antinous, wilt thou be wroth with me
For that which I shall say ? I should be glad
To take this also at the hand of Zeus.
Is this, sayst thou, the worst that falls to man ?
Nay, it is no bad thing to be a king.
A king's house quickly waxeth rich ; a king
Is held in greater honour. But there are
Right many other kings of the Achæans
In sea-girt Ithaca, kings young and old ;
And haply one of them will have this place,
Since dead is good Odysseus. But for me,
I will be lord of our own house and slaves,
Which good Odysseus won for me in battle.'

Then was he answered by Eurymachus,
The son of Polybus : ' Telemachus,
On the gods' knees in sooth this issue lies,
Who shall be king in sea-girt Ithaca
Of the Achæans. But mayst thou possess
Thine own, and be the master in thy house ;
And never come a man to wrest them from thee
Against thy will by force, till Ithaca
Be desert ! But I fain would ask thee, friend,
Touching that stranger, whence and of what land
Doth the man claim to be ? Where are his kinsmen
And native fields ? Comes he with any tidings
About thy father's homing ? Came he hither
In pursuance of some matter of his own ?
Why, how he started up, and lo ! was gone,
Nor did he tarry to be known ; and yet
To look upon he seemed no sorry man.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Eurymachus, my father's coming home
Surely is lost ; nor now do I put faith

In tidings, whencesoever they may come,
Not reck of any prophecy, which haply
My mother may obtain of some diviner
Whom she has bidden in. As for the stranger
He is from Taphos, and a household friend ;
And he avers that he is Mentès, son
Of wise Anchialus, and that he rules
The Taphians, lovers of the oar.'

So said Telemachus, but in his heart
He knew the immortal goddess. Now the suitors
Turned to the dance and to delightful song,
And made them merry until evening came ;
And dark eve overtook them making merry.
And then they went each to his home to rest.

But where his room was built in the fair court,
High up, with a wide outlook, thither went
Telemachus to bed, but full of thought.
And with him trusty Eurycleia went,
And carried blazing links. She was the daughter
Of Ops, Peisenor's son ; and long ago
Laertes bought her with his wealth, quite young,
And gave the price of twenty oxen for her ;
And her he honoured even as he did
His faithful wife, but not to vex his wife,
Never lay with her. She it was who carried
The blazing torches for Telemachus,
For she of all the handmaids loved him best,
And she had nursed him when he was a babe.
Opening the doors of the well-built room,
He sate down on the bedstead and took off
His tunic soft, and laid it in the hands
Of the wise dame. She smoothed and folded it,
And on a peg beside the corded bedstead
She hung it up, and then she left the room,
And pulled the door to by the silver handle ;

And lastly drew the bolt home by its strap.
So all night long, wrapped in a fleece, he thought
Upon the journey which Athene showed him.

BOOK II

As soon as early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, Odysseus' son leapt up from bed
And donned his clothes and slung his biting sword
About his neck, and on his shining feet
Tied goodly sandals. From his room he strode
Seeming to those who met him like a god.
And there and then he bade the shrilling heralds
Call the long-haired Achæans to the assembly.
And so they made the summons, and full soon
The people came together. Now when they
Were congregated and had met together,
He went his way to the assembly, holding
A bronze spear in his hand, and not alone,
For two swift hounds went with him ; and Athene
Upon him shed a wondrous grace, and all
The people marvelled at him as he came.
And in his father's seat he sate him down,
While elder men gave way.

Then was the lord Ægyptius first to speak
Among them. He was bowed with age, and wise
In things past count ; and for this cause he spake,
That his own son, the spearman Antiphus,
Had in god-like Odysseus' company
Sailed in the hollow ships to Ilios, land
Of steeds ; but him the savage Cyclops
Killed in his hollow cave and made of him
His latest meal. Three other sons he had,
And one, Eurynomus, kept with the suitors,
While two abode upon their father's farm.
Yet even so forgot he not that other

With sorrow and lament, and with a tear
For him, he made address and spake among them :

‘ List to me now, ye men of Ithaca,
And what I say.* Our session or assembly
Not once hath met since in the hollow ships
Sailed good Odysseus. Who hath called it now ?
On whom among the young men or the elders
Hath come a need so sore ? Or hath he heard
Some tidings of the army’s coming, which
Having first learned thereof he might announce ?
Or can it be some other public matter
That he would tell and show us ? Well, I deem him
A right good useful man ! May Zeus fulfil
Some blessing on him, e’en whate’er he wishes.’

So said he, and Odysseus’ son rejoiced
To hear the word of omen ; and no longer
He sate, but burned to speak, and up he rose
In mid assembly. The wise-minded herald
Peisenor put the staff into his hands.
Then, first addressing the old man, he spake :

‘ Old sir, as thou thyself shalt shortly know
Not far afield is he who called the moot ;
’Twas I—on me of all men grief hath come.
I have no tidings of the host’s return
To tell you, having learned it first myself ;
Nor have I any other public matter
To tell or show you. No, ’tis my own need,
In that upon my home hath fallen evil,
Twofold. First I have lost my noble father,
Who once was king among you here, and gentle
As were a father ; and there now is come
Evil far bigger still, which surely will
Soon break up all my house, and ruin all
My living. Suitors, sons of men who are
Our noblest-born, these have beset my mother

Against her will. They shrink from visiting
Icarius, her father, in his home,
That he might fix the bride-gifts for his daughter
And give her to the man he will, to him •
Who wins his favour ; but day after day
They throng our house ; they kill our kine and sheep
And fatted goats ; they riot and they drink
The sparkling wine like prodigals ; they work
Great havoc here ; for there is left no man
Such as Odysseus was, to keep the house
From ruin ; as for me, nowise am I
Strong as he was to keep off harm. Suppose
I tried, I should be found weak and untrained
To strength : and yet I would defend myself,
Had I but power ! For things past sufferance
Are now being done, and past all decency
My house is wrecked. O let it rouse you too,
And pay ye heed to those who dwell around you,
Your neighbours ; dread the anger of the gods,
Lest haply being wroth with evil doings
They turn upon you ! By Olympian Zeus,
And Themis, who assembles and dissolves
Meetings of men, I pray you, friends, forbear,
And let me pine in bitter grief alone :
Unless so be my father, good Odysseus,
Injured the mailed Achæans out of malice,
And to requite me for it ye in malice
Do me like wrong by spurring these men on !
Better for me it were that ye yourselves
Should eat my wealth and flocks up. For if ye
Devoured them, I should be repaid somehow
Ere long ; for I would urge my plea throughout
The town, demanding back my own, till all
Should be restored. But past remede are now
The sorrows that ye put upon my heart.'

So in his wrath he spake, and dashed to earth
The staff, and burst out crying. Pity fell
On all the people, then the rest kept silence,
And no man had the heart to answer him
With angry words : alone Antinous answered :

‘ Telemachus, ungovernable spirit,
Thou boaster ! what is this that thou hast said
To shame us, and wouldst fix on us reproach ?
I tell thee, not with the Achæan suitors
But with thy mother lies the fault, for she
Is cunning above women. Why, ’tis now
The third year, and the fourth is passing fast,
Since she began to cheat the Achæans’ hearts
Within them. Hope she gives to all, and makes
Each man a promise, and sends messages,
Although her mind is set on other things.
And in her heart she planned this trick besides :
She set up in her halls a mighty web,
And fell a-weaving ; fine of thread it was
And very wide ; whereon she said to us :

“ My princely suitors, now that good Odysseus
Is dead, though ye would speed my marriage on,
Have patience yet, till I complete this robe ;
I would not that my spinning should be wasted ;
’Tis prince Laertes’ shroud, against the day
When the fell doom of death that lays men low
Shall strike him down, that of Achæan women
Throughout the land no one may count it blame
In me, that he should sleep without a shroud,
Who in his life had gotten great possessions.”

‘ So said she, and our haughty hearts assented.
So then by day she wove at that great web,
And in the night she bade them set beside her
The torches, and unpicked it ; thus by craft
She fooled the Achæans, and eluded them

A three years' space : but when the fourth year came
With the returning seasons, then it was
One of her women who knew all told us,
And her we caught undoing the fine web.
And so perforce and sore against her will
She finished it. To thee therefore the suitors
Return this answer, that thyself mayst know it,
And all the Achæans know it. Send away
Thy mother, and command her that she marry
Whomso her father bids and she approves.
But if she still persistently affronts
The sons of the Achæans, counting on
The gifts Athene gave her beyond women—
Skill in fair handiwork, and clever wit
And craft—whereof we never heard the like,
Not even in fair-haired Achæan women,
Lost ladies of old years, Alcmena, Tyro,
Or comely-crowned Mycene ; none of these
Was like Penelope in shrewdness ; yet
In this one thing her scheming is not sound.
For men shall eat thy substance and possessions
So long as she continues in this mind
Which now the gods suggest to her. She wins
Herself great glory, but for thee regret
For thy much substance. We will neither go
To our own lands, nor elsewhere, until
She marries of the Achæans whom she will.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Turn out of doors against her will the one
Who bore and nursed me ? No, Antinous,
I cannot do it ! And, alive or dead,
My father is abroad. It would come hard
On me to pay Icarius a big sum
As needs I must, if of mine own free will
I send her back ; for I shall suffer evil

From him, her father, and the gods will send
Still more ; for as she leaves the house, my mother
Will call the dread Avengers down, and men
Will blame me. I will never speak this word !
But, if your heart mishkes it, quit my halls ;
Make ready other feasts ; eat up your own
Possessions, gadding round from house to house ;
Or, if ye think it likelier and better
That one man's goods be spoiled without atonement,
Well, waste ye them ! but I will call upon
The everlasting gods, if haply Zeus
May grant that deeds of recompense be wrought.
Then in this hall should ye die unavenged !'

So spake Telemachus ; and Zeus, whose voice
Is heard afar, in answer sent two eagles
High flying from the mountain top. They flew
Beside each other swift as wind a while
With pinions spread, but when they came amid
The meeting with its many voices, there
They wheeled about and flapped their beating wings
And glared down on the heads of all, and death
Was in their eyes. Then each one scored its claws
Across the other's cheeks and neck ; and then
Off to the right they dashed, across the houses
And o'er the town. And as their eyes beheld,
Men marvelled at the birds, and in their hearts
They pondered on what things should come to pass.
So Halitherses, son of Mastor, spake
Among them, that old lord, for he excelled
His peers in bird-lore and in words of fate.
And with goodwill he made his speech to them :

' List to me now, O men of Ithaca,
And what I say ; and chiefly to the suitors
Do I declare my tidings, for on them
Great woe is rolling. For Odysseus shall not

Be absent from his friends much longer ; nay;
E'en now, methinks, he is near, and sowing seeds.
Of death and doom for these men, every one .
Ay, he shall be a curse to many others
Of us who dwell in clear-seen Ithaca.
But long ere that let us take thought how we
May check the suitors—rather let them check
Themselves, as straightway were the better for them.
For as no novice do I prophesy
But with sure knowledge. I aver to you
That with Odysseus all things are fulfilled
E'en as I told him, when the Argives sailed
For Troy, and with them wise Odysseus went.
I said that after suffering many ills
And losing all his fellows, he should come
Home in the twentieth year, unknown to all ;
All of which things are coming now to pass.'

Then 'twas Eurymachus who answered him,
The son of Polybus : ' Go to, old man,
Get home, and prophesy unto thy children,
Lest they come haply to some grief hereafter !
Herein am I by far a better prophet
'Than thou. There be a many birds that fly
Beneath the sun's rays, and not all are fateful.
As for Odysseus, he is dead far off,
As would that also thou hadst perished with him !
So wouldst thou not be babbling of thy omens,
Or rousing passionate Telemachus,
In expectation that he may perchance
Make some gift to thy house. I will speak out,
And what I say shall surely be fulfilled.
If thou, with thy great knowledge from of old,
Dost with thy talk beguile a younger man
And stir him up to anger—first of all,
'Twill mean more grief for him, and yet he can

Do absolutely nothing, thanks to these ,
While we shall lay on thee, old man, a fine
Payment whereof will irk thee, and thou shalt
Be sore distressed. Now I myself will give
Telemachus this rede before you all .
Let him enjoin his mother to go back
Unto her father's house, and there her kin
Shall furnish forth her wedding, and make ready
Right many gifts, yea, all that should attend
A well-loved daughter. For ere that, I trow,
We sons of the Achæans will not cease
From our harsh wooing, since, come what come may,
We fear no man--no, not Telemachus,
For all his flood of words--nor do we reck
Of any prophecy whereof, old man,
Thou talkest vainly--and dost make thyself
The more disliked. Ay, and his wealth shall be
Devoured injuriously without a thought
Of recompense, so long as she puts off
The Achæans in this matter of her marriage,
While day by day we wait and strive for her
Perfection, nor go after other women
Whom it were meet for each of us to wed.'

Then wise Telemachus returned him answer :
' Eurymachus, and all ye other princes
Who court my mother, herein I entreat you
No longer now, nor will I speak thereof,
For now the gods and all the Achæans know it.
Come, give me a swift ship and twenty men
Who shall accomplish both my journey forth
And back. For I will go to sandy Pylos
Or Sparta, to seek news of the return
Of my long-absent father, if perchance
Any of mortal men may tell me of him,
Or I may hear a voice from Zeus, which often

Brings news to men. Now if so be I hear
My father is alive and coming home,
Why then, for all this wasting I can last
For one year more. But if I hear that he
Is dead and gone, then will I come back home,
And raise a mound to him, and over it
Pay funeral rites, full many, as is due ;
And give my mother to a husband.'

So saying he sate down, and in their midst
Rose Mentor, who was brave Odysseus' comrade ;
And unto him, when with his ships he went,
Odysseus gave the charge o'er all his household
That they should listen to the old man's words
And he keep all things safe. With good intent
He made his speech to them :

' Hearken ye now, O men of Ithaca,
To what I tell you. Let no sceptred king
Henceforth be kind and meek with all his heart
Nor in his mind heed goodness ; but let him
Always be harsh and do unrighteously,
Since no one of the people whom he ruled—
Ay, and was gentle as a father to them—
Remembereth divine Odysseus now !
But 'tis not that I grudge the haughty suitors
That in the dark devices of their mind
They do their deeds of violence. For it is
At hazard of their lives that they devour
Odysseus' house by force, and say that he
Will come no more. No ! but I do reproach
You other people, that ye all sit still
And cry not shame and bid the suitors cease,
Though ye are many and they are so few.'

Then unto him Leocritus replied,
Euenor's son : ' Mentor, thou mischief-maker,
Thou man of wandering wits, what hast thou said,

Bidding men make us cease? Hard work it were
To fight about a feast, and that with those
Outnumbering you ! Though Ithacan Odysseus
Himself should come, burning at heart to drive
The lordly suitors feasting in his house
Out of the hall, his wife for all her longing
Should have no joy of his returning home ;
But, if he fought with foes outnumbering him,
He then and there should meet a shameful death.
Thou hast not said aright ! But come, ye people,
Scatter each one of you to his own lands.
And for this youth, Mentor and Halitherses
Shall speed his journey, for of old they are
Friends of his father's house. And yet, methinks,
He will sit long and get his tidings here
In Ithaca, and never make this journey.'

So said he and in haste broke up the meeting.
The others scattered, each for home ; the suitors
Went to the dwelling of divine Odysseus.

Telemachus went lonely to the shore,
And having washed his hands in the grey sea,
Besought Athene. ' Harken to my prayer,
O thou who camest yesterday as god
Unto my house, and didst lay charge on me
To take a ship and cross the misty deep,
For news of my long-absent father's coming.
Lo, the Achæans hinder all my purpose,
But most the suitors, in their wicked pride.'

So spake he praying, and Athene drew
Near him, in Mentor's likeness, both to eye
And ear ; and said to him with wingéd words :

' Telemachus, not now nor yet hereafter
Shalt thou be weak or witless, if one drop
Is in thee of thy father's gallant spirit,
With his capacity for making good

Both word and work. In that case this thy journey
Shall not be vain nor unfulfilled ; but if
His son thou art not, nor Penelope's,
I have no hope of thine accomplishing
Thy purpose. For indeed few sons are like
Their fathers ; most are worse, and few are better ;
But seeing that not now nor yet hereafter
Shalt thou be weak or witless, nor hath wholly
Odysseus' wisdom failed thee, so there is
A hope of thine accomplishing these works,
Then never mind the suitors' plans and purpose—
Fools, who are wholly stupid and unjust !
Nor know they aught of death or of dark fate
Which is already hard on them, that they
Are all to perish in a day. For thee,
The journey thou art bent on shall not be
Much more delayed, so true a friend am I
Unto thy father ; I will fit thee out
A speedy ship and go with thee myself.
But get thee to the house and join the suitors ;
Have victuals ready ; stow them all in vessels,
The wine in pitchers, and in well-sewn sacks
The barley-meal that is the pith of men.
But I will through the town and gather quickly
A crew of volunteers. In sea-girt Ithaca
Full many ships there are, both new and old :
I will look out the best of them for thee,
And quickly we will rig her up and launch her
On the broad deep.'

So spake Athene, maid of Zeus ; nor did
Telemachus delay, once he had heard
The goddess' voice ; but to the house he went
With heavy heart, and in the halls he found
The haughty suitors. In the courtyard they
Were flaying goats and singeing pigs ; and straight

Antinous walked towards him with a laugh,
And clasped his hand and spake and said to him .

‘ Telemachus, ungovernable spirit,
Thou boaster, harbour in thy breast no more
Ill word or deed, but prithee, eat and drink
E’en as before. The Achæans without fail
Will furnish thee with all the things thou needest,
The ship and chosen oarsmen, that thou mayst
Be gone with speed unto most holy Pylos,
Seeking for tidings of thy gallant father.’

Then wise Telemachus made him reply :
‘ Antinous, ’tis impossible for me
In your proud company to sup in peace,
Or to make merry with a quiet mind.
Is’t not enough, ye suitors, that ye wasted
My many good possessions in time past,
While I was still a child ? But now that I
Am grown and learn by listening to others,
Yea, and my courage is increased within me,
I will bid fair to loose black fate on you,
Whether I go to Pylos or stay here
At home. Yes, go I will, nor shall the voyage
Be vain, whereof I speak ; a passenger
I must be, since I may not be the master
Of ship or oarsmen ; for ye doubtless thought
’Twould better serve your turn to have it so.’

He spoke, and from Antinous snatched his hand
Smartly away. Now with the feast the suitors
Made busy through the hall ; they mocked at him
And jeered, and thus some haughty youth would say :

‘ Ay, ay ! Telemachus is making plans
To murder us, and will bring men to help him
From sandy Pylos or from Sparta even,
So desperately is he set upon it.
Or else he means to go to Ephyre,

That fertile land, for deadly drugs, to cast
Into the mixing-bowl and kill us all.'

Then would another of the proud youths say :
' But he himself—who knows ?—as he goes hence
Aboard his ship, may perish wandering
Far from his friends, e'en as Odysseus did.
So should he cause us even greater trouble,
For then must we divide among us all
His wealth, and give his house unto his mother
To keep, and unto whosoever weds her !'

So said they ; but Telemachus went down
To the wide, vaulted strong-room of his father,
Where gold and bronze lay piled, and clothes in chests
And stores of fragrant oil. There also stood
Casks of sweet wine and old, that held inside them
A virgin drink divine, all orderly
Ranged by the wall, in case Odysseus ever
Came home again after much toil and pain.
Closed were the tightly-fitting double doors,
Where, night and day, abode a stewardess
Who kept the charge of all with great discretion ;
And this was Eurycleia, daughter of Ops,
Peisenor's son. To her Telemachus
When he had called her to the strong-room, said :

' Now, Nanny, draw me wine, sweet wine, in jars,
The second best to that which thou art keeping
With that ill-fated man in mind, Odysseus,
Offspring of Zeus, in case perchance he come
I know not whence, escaped from fate and death.
So fill twelve jars, and fit them all with covers,
And pour me barley meal in well-sewn skins ;
Of which ground meal see there be twenty measures.
Let no one know but thou, and have these things
Got all together, for at evening I
Will fetch them, when my mother goes upstairs

And turns her thoughts to rest. For I am going
To Sparta, ay, and sandy Pylos too,
To see if I can gather any tidings
Of my dear father on his homeward way.'

So said he ; but his fond nurse Eurycleia
Cried out, and spoke in wingéd words of wail :
' Dear child, how came this thought into thy mind ?
Why wouldst thou fare abroad over wide earth,
An only well-loved son ? In some strange land
Divine Odysseus far from home is dead ,
And soon as thou art gone, these men will plan
Evil thereafter for thee, that thou perish
By guile, and they will share all these possessions.
Nay, bide thou here in charge of what is thine ;
There is no need for thee to suffer ills,
Or go a-roving o'er the restless deep.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
' Nanny, cheer up : behind this plan of mine
I tell thee, is a god. But swear an oath
To utter naught of this to my dear mother
Till the eleventh or twelfth day be come,
Or till she miss me of herself, and learn
Of my departure, that she may not mar
Her pretty face with weeping.'

So said he, and the old dame swore to heaven
A great oath not to tell ; and having sworn
And made an end, she went and drew off wine
For him in jars, and poured the barley meal
In well-sewn sacks. Meanwhile Telemachus
Went to the hall and mingled with the suitors.
And now Athene, keen-eyed goddess, had
Another thought. All through the town she went
In likeness of Telemachus, and stood
And spoke to each man bidding them forgather
By the swift ship at dusk. Moreover she

Begged from Noemon, Phronius' fine son,
A speedy ship, and he with right good will
Promised to lend it her.

Now the sun set and all the ways grew dark.
Thereon she drew the swift ship to the sea,
And all such gear as a decked galley carries
She put aboard, and at the harbour's mouth
She moored her, and the goodly crew assembled
Around her, and the goddess cheered them all.

And yet again keen-eyed Athene took
New counsel. To divine Odysseus' house
She went her way, and set herself to shed
Sweet slumber on the suitors, till she made them
Dazed at their drink and letting fall their cups.
So they, instead of sitting longer there,
Rose up to go to rest throughout the city,
For on their eyelids sleep was falling now.
Whereon keen-eyed Athene, likening
Herself to Mentor both in form and voice,
Summoned Telemachus from the fine halls :

' By now, Telemachus, thine armoured comrades
Sit at the oar and wait thy word to go.
Come ; ere we keep them longer from the journey.

With that Pallas Athene led the way
Apace ; and in her steps he came behind.
Now when they had come down to the ship and sea,
Upon the shore they found their long-haired comrades,
To whom Telemachus, the strong prince said :

' This way, my friends, to fetch the stores ; by now
They all are got together in the hall.
My mother knows not of it, nor the servants
Either ; one woman only heard my order.'

With that he led the way ; they went with him.
So they brought all the things and laid them by
In the decked ship, according as he bade them,

Odysseus' son Then stepped Telemachus
On board ; howbeit Athene went before him
And sate down in the stern, and near to her
Telemachus sate too. The crew cast off
The ropes and went aboard, and manned the thwarts.
And a fair wind keen-eyed Athene sent them,
Strong Zephyr, singing o'er the wine-dark sea.
Then to his men Telemachus called out
To lay hands to the tackle ; they obeyed ;
They raised the mast of pine and in its socket
They fixed it, and with forestays made it fast,
And hauled the white sails up with twisted ropes
Of ox-hide. So the belly of the sail
Filled with the wind, and loud the dark wave sang
Around the forefoot of the running ship,
As she sped on accomplishing her path
Across the wave. Then having made all fast
Throughout the swift, black ship, they set out bowls
Brim-full of wine and poured forth offerings
To the immortal gods that are for ever,
But to Zeus' keen-eyed daughter most of all.
So all the livelong night and through the dawn
The galley cleft her way.

BOOK III

Now the sun rose and left the lovely mere,
And sprang up brazen heaven, to give light
To the immortals and to mortal men
On earth, grain-giver ; and the travellers came
To Pylos, Nestor's strong-built citadel.
The folk there on the shore were sacrificing
Black bulls unto the dark-haired earthquake-god.
Nine companies they were, and in each sate
Five hundred men, and every company
Held nine bulls ready. Just as they had tasted
The vitals, and were burning to the god
The slices of the thighs, the voyagers
Put straight in shore, and raised and furled the sail
Of the trim ship, and moored her, and themselves
Stepped out. Telemachus too left the ship,
But 'twas Athene led. And first the goddess,
Keen-eyed Athene spake to him and said :
 ' Telemachus, no longer needst thou feel
One whit abashed. For to this very end
Hast thou sailed over sea to gather news
Touching thy father—where earth closed o'er him
And what a fate he met. Come now, go straight
To Nestor, lord of horses ; let us know
What counsel hath he, hidden in his breast.
Thyself entreat him that he answer surely.
Lie he will not ; for he is very wise.'
And wise Telemachus made answer to her :
' Mentor, how can I go and how can greet him,
Who ne'er have proved myself in subtle speech ?
Besides, 'tis shame for youth to question age.'

Again keen-eyed Athene said to him :
' Telemachus, thou shalt thyself conceive
Thy speech in part, and part the god will give thee
To say ; for thou hast not been born and bred,
I wot, without the favour of the gods.'

With that Pallas Athene led the way
Apace, and in her steps he came behind ;
And so they reached the gathering and the groups
Of them of Pylos. Nestor with his sons
Was seated there, while round about his folk
Prepared the feast, roasting some joints of meat
And spitting others. When they saw the strangers,
All crowded round and took their hands in welcome
And begged them to sit down. First Nestor's son,
Peisistratus approached and took the hands
Of each, and at the feast he made them sit
On soft wool fleeces on the sands, beside
His brother Thrasymedes and his father.
Then portions of the inner meat he gave them,
And poured out wine into a golden cup,
And, pledging her in welcome, he addressed
Athene, maid of Zeus, the ægis-bearer :

' Say now, my guest, a prayer to lord Poseidon,
For lo, his feast it is that at your coming
Thou hast encountered. Then, when ye have prayed
And poured libation, as is meet, give also
Thy friend the cup of honeyed wine to pour ;
Since he too prays, I ween, to the immortals ;
For all men need the gods. Howbeit he
Is younger and of mine own age ; wherefore
To thee will I give first this golden goblet.'

Therewith a cup of sweet wine in her hands
He placed ; and with his judgment and discretion,
In that he gave her first the golden cup,
Athene was well pleased ; and then and there

She said an earnest prayer to king Poseidon :

‘Hear thou, Poseidon, that dost girdle earth,
And grudge thou not in answer to our prayer
Fulfilment of our needs. To Nestor first
And to his sons grant glory ; then to all
The others, yea, to all the folk of Pylos,
Gracious return for this fine hecatomb.
Moreover let Telemachus and me
Return, when we have finished that for which
We have come hither with our swift black ship.’

Now, as she prayed, she was herself fulfilling
The prayer. Then to Telemachus she gave
The fair two-handled cup, and in like fashion
Odysseus’ dear son prayed. Now when they had
Roasted the outer flesh and drawn it off
The spits, they shared the portions, and enjoyed
A glorious feast ; and when they had had their fill
Of meat and drink, then first among them spake
Gerenian Nestor, lord of horses :

‘Now is it better to enquire and ask
The strangers who they are, now that they have
Enjoyed their food. Say, strangers, who are ye?
And coming whence sail ye the water-ways?
Are ye on trading bent, or roving vaguely
O’er sea like pirates, hazarding their lives
And bringing bale on folk of alien lands?’

Then wise Telemachus made bold to answer,
For that herself Athene gave him boldness
To ask about his father that was gone,
And win himself a good report ’mid men :

‘O Nestor, thou great pride of the Achæans,
Thou askest, son of Neleus, whence we are ;
And I will surely tell thee. We have come
From Ithaca, that lieth under Neion,
And ’tis a private not a public matter

I have to tell. I chase a far-spread rumour,
If haply I may hear it, of my father,
Goodly Odysseus of the steadfast heart,
Who by thy side, they say, once fought and sacked
The city of the Trojans. Touching all
The rest who fought against the Trojans, we
Have news, where each man met his woeful end ;
Yet of my father's death the son of Cronos
Hath let us hear no tidings ; for no man
Can soothly say where he hath died, or whether
He was o'ercome by foemen on the land
Or on the deep 'mid Amphitrite's waves.
Now come I therefore to thy knees, to know
If thou wilt tell me of his woeful ending,
Whether with thine own eyes thou sawest it,
Or heard'st the story from some other wanderer ;
For to exceeding grief his mother bore him.
And do thou nowise out of ruth or pity
Speak soothing words, but tell me plainly how
Thou camest to behold him. Ah, I beg thee,
If e'er my father, good Odysseus, promised
Thee aught of word or deed, and made it good,
There in the land of Troy, where ye Achæans
Endured affliction, mind thee of it now,
I pray, and let me have the very truth.'

Then the horse-lord, Gerenian Nestor, answered :
' Friend, since thou callest back to mind the woe
We sons of the Achæans, we whose spirit
None could withstand, endured in that same country ;
All we endured on shipboard, as we roamed
For plunder o'er the misty deep, wherever
Achilles led us ; all our fightings round
King Priam's mighty town—ay, there it was
That all our best were slain ; there valiant Aias
Lies, and Achilles there, and there Patroclus,

Peer of the gods in counsel ; there too lies
Mine own dear son, stout warrior and unstained, ·
Unbeaten both in fight and speed of foot,
Antilochus ; and much besides we suffered—
But who of mortal men could tell it all ?
Nay, though thou wert for five or six years' space
To sojourn here, and ask me all the sorrows
The brave Achæans bore there, thou wouldst weary
Before the end and turn to thine own land.
For nine whole years were we about them, plotting
Their ruin by all kinds of wiles, and scarce
Would Cronos' son accomplish it. And there
Never a man durst match with him in counsel,
For in all craft by far the best he was,
Odysseus, goodly man—thy father, if
Thou art indeed his son. I am amazed
As I do look on thee. 'Tis true, thy speech
Resembles his ; one would not think a youth
Could speak so like him. All the while that we
Were there, I tell thee, I and good Odysseus
Nor in assembly nor in council once
Spoke different ways ; but being of one mind
Gave wise, far-sighted counsel to the Argives,
How all should turn out best. But when we had
Sacked the tall town of Priam, and had sailed
Away, and some god had dispersed the Achæans,
Then it was, then, Zeus in his heart devised
A sorrowful home-journey for the Argives,
For nowise were they all discreet and just ;
Wherefore so many met an evil fate
Through the grim anger of the keen-eyed godless,
The daughter of the mighty sire, who set
Strife 'twixt the two Atridæ. Now they twain
Bade all the Achæans to the meeting-place,
But thoughtlessly and out of order ; for

'Twas sunset, and the sons of the Achæans
Came heavy with their wine ; and the two chiefs
Spake and explained why they had massed the people.
Then, mark thou, Menelaus bade the Achæans
All mind them of their coming home across
The broad sea-backs, but in nowise did that
Please Agamemnon, who desired to hold
'The host and offer holy hecatombs,
So to appease Athene's dreadful wrath ;
Fool ! for he knew not this, that she would never
Be soothed, because the everlasting gods
Not lightly change their mind. So stood the twain
Banding hard words, and with a wondrous din
Arose the mailed Achæans. Divers plans
Found favour with them. So we bivouacked,
Each party thinking hard things of the other,
For Zeus drew down on us an evil doom.
But with the dawn some of us launched our ships
On the bright sea, and put our goods on board,
And the low-girdled women. Howbeit half
The host held back and stayed with Agamemnon,
The son of Atreus, shepherd of the people ;
While half of us embarked and rowed away.
Our galleys made good sailing, for some god
Strewed to its depths the sea. Now being come
To Tenedos, we sacrificed unto the gods,
Eager to reach our homes, but not yet Zeus
Intended our returning ; hard he was,
And raised bad strife among us yet once more.
Some put their curving ships about and went
Their way, to wit, the men of prince Odysseus,
The wise and crafty schemer, showing favour
Once more to Agamemnon, Atreus' son.
But I with all the fleet that followed me
Fled, for I knew the god was planning evil ;

So too the warlike son of Tydeus fled,
And spurred his men ; and late upon our track
Came fair-haired Menelaus, and in Lesbos
He found us in debate o'er the long voyage,
Whether to sail seaward of rugged Chios
Toward Psyria's isle, and keep it on our left,
Or inside Chios and past windy Mimas.
So we besought the godhead for a sign,
And he declared his sign and bade us cleave
The mid sea to Eubœa, that we might
Escape the quickest way from misery.
And a shrill wind got up and blew ; and swift
The ships ran o'er the fishy ways, and touched
By nightfall at Geræstus. There we offered
Poseidon many thighs of bulls, for joy
That we had traversed such a stretch of sea.
'Twas the fourth day when those with Diomed,
The son of Tydeus, lord of horses, stayed
Their gallant ships in Argos ; but I held
Onward for Pylos, nor once fell the breeze
Since first the god had sent it forth to blow.

' So without tidings then, dear lad, I came
And know naught of those others, who were saved
Of the Achæans, and who lost. But all
That I have gathered sitting here at home,
Thou, as is meet, shalt hear ; I will not hide it.
Safely, they say, came home the Myrmidons,
Wild spearmen, captained by the glorious son
Of mighty-souled Achilles. Safely too
Came Philoctetes, Poias' gallant son.
And unto Crete Idomeneus brought home
All of his fellows who escaped the war ;
The sea stole none from him. And ye yourselves
Though far afield, have heard of Atreus' son,
How he came home, and how Ægisthus planned

An evil death for him ; but he himself
Paid in good sooth an awful reckoning.
So good a thing it is that of the dead
There should be left a son, e'en as that son
Took vengeance on his glorious father's slayer.
Subtle Ægisthus. And do thou too, friend,
For fair and tall I see thou art, be brave ;
That e'en a man of men unborn may praise thee.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' O Nestor, son of Neleus, thou great pride
Of the Achæans, yea, that son indeed
Took vengeance, and the Greeks shall bear abroad
His fame for even men unborn to hear.
O that the gods would clothe me with such strength
To quit the suitors for their grievous sin,
Who in their wantonness devise against me
Wild doings ! but for me the gods have spun
No such good hap—for me nor for my father ,
And now I must in any case abide it.'

Then said Geren'ian Nestor, lord of horses :
' Friend, since thou callest to my mind these things
And speakest of them, in thy halls, they say,
A crowd of suitors for thy mother's hand
Are planning evil things in thy despite.
Say, art thou willing to be thus oppressed,
Or do the people hate thee through the land,
Obeying some god's voice ? Who knows but that
Some day may come Odysseus, and requite
Their violence, maybe himself alone
Or with him all the host of the Achæans ?
O, were keen-eyed Athene pleased to love thee,
Even as once exceedingly she cared
For bright Odysseus in the land of Troy,
Where we Achæans suffered ! Never yet
Gods have I seen showing their love so clear

As Pallas showed, clear standing at his side.
If she were pleased to love thee in such sort
And care for thee at heart, then some of them
Might clean forget this marriage.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him .
' Old sir, I cannot think that this word will
Be brought to pass ; thy saying is too hard.
I am amazed ; I have no hope that this
Might be, not even if the gods so willed.'

Then the keen-eyed Athene said to him :
' Telemachus, what word is this that hath
Escaped the barrier of thy teeth ? A god
Who willed it, lightly, from however far,
Could bring a man safe home ! And for my part,
Fain would I suffer many grievous toils
Ere I came back and saw my homing day,
Than come and perish on mine own hearthstone,
As by Ægisthus' and his own wife's hands
Was Agamemnon treacherously slain.
But death, look thou, that comes to all alike
The very gods cannot avert, nay, not
From him they love, when the grim blow of doom
That layeth all men low shall strike him down.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
' For all our sorrow, Mentor, let us speak
Of this no more ; for him assuredly
No more is there returning, but ere now
Death and black doom the gods have planned for him.
But now another thing would I enquire
And ask of Nestor, since o'er all men else
Judgment he knows and wisdom ; for they say
He hath been king for thrice a generation
Of men, and to mine eyes he hath the look
Of an immortal. Nestor, son of Neleus,
Tell thou me truly, how was it he died,

Wide-ruling Agamemnon, Atreus' son ?
And where was Menelaus ? For the king
What death did treacherous Ægisthus plot,
Who killed a man far better than himself ?
Or was not Menelaus then at home
In Argos of Achæa, but abroad
Among men elsewhere roaming, so that he
Took heart and did the murder ?'

Then said Gerenian Nestor, lord of horses :
' Yea, son, now will I tell thee all the truth.
Indeed thou guessest of thyself aright
How this thing would have chanced, if when he came
From Troy, Atrides, fair-haired Menelaus,
Had caught Ægisthus in his halls alive.
Nor e'en in death would men have heaped the earth
Above his corpse, but dogs and birds had torn him
Exposed upon the plain outside the city.
And for him none of the Achæan women
Had wept ; for 'twas a frightful deed he planned.
Well, we were camped there, working out much toil,
But in a nook of Argos, land of horses,
Serene he lay, and paid his constant court
To Agamemnon's wife ; and for a season
She would have none of the unseemly thing,
Fair Clytemnestra, for she had good sense.
Moreover at her side there was a minstrel
Whom Agamemnon, when he went to Troy
Had straitly charged to keep his wife from harm.
But when the doom of heaven bound her fast
To her destruction, then Ægisthus carried
The minstrel to a desert isle and left him
To be the prey and spoil of birds. But her,
A willing lover with a lady willing,
He brought to his own house ; and then he burned
Upon the holy altars of the gods

A many thigh-pieces, and offered up
Much woven stuff and gold, since he had done .
A mighty deed beyond his utmost hope.
' Now we were sailing on our way from Troy;
Atrides and myself, good friends together ;
But when we came to sacred Sunium, cape
Of Athens, then Apollo smote and slew
With his mild arrows Menelaus' pilot,
His hand upon the running vessel's helm,
Phrontis, Onetor's son, who over all
The tribes of men excelled in steersmanship
Whenever gales blew strong. So Menelaus,
Keen as he was to sail, was held back there,
To bury his mate and pay him the last rites.
But when in turn, as o'er the wine-dark sea
He fared with his light ships, in his swift course
He came to the steep height of Malea,
'Twas then that Zeus, whose voice is heard afar,
Planned him a frightful path and poured on him
Blasts of the shrieking winds, and the huge waves
Were swollen mountain-high. So he divided
His fleet, and part he brought to Crete, where dwelt
Cydonians by the streams of Iardanus.
Now smooth and sheer toward the sea there stands
At Gortyn's border in the misty deep
A headland, where the south-west wind impels
The wave in strength against the left-hand cape
Towards Phaestus ; but a little rock holds back
The rush of water. Thither came those ships,
And narrowly their crews escaped destruction,
But on the reef the billows brake to pieces
The ships themselves. Howbeit wind and wave
Bore on the other five dark-fronted ships
And brought them nigh to Egypt. So he wandered
There with his ships 'mid men of foreign speech,

Amassing gold and wealth. And that same while
Ægisthus planned this woeful work at home.
Seven years he ruled Mycenæ, rich in gold,
When he had slain Atrides, and the people
Were subject unto him ; but in the eighth
Came on him good Orestes, back from Athens,
To be his bane, and slew his father's slayer,
The traitor who had killed his glorious sire ;
And having slain him, made a funeral feast
Unto the Argives o'er his hateful mother
And soft Ægisthus ; and that selfsame day
To him came Menelaus of the war-cry,
Bringing much wealth, ay, all his ships could bear.

' So rove not thou, my friend, from home too long,
Leaving thy wealth behind, and in thy house
Fellows so wanton, lest they may divide
And eat up all thy wealth while thou art gone
On a vain quest. Rather, I charge and bid thee,
Go unto Menelaus. He hath come
Lately from foreign parts, a land of folk
So distant that no man could hope at heart
To find his way back from it, once the storms
Had swept him off into so wide a sea ;
Whence in a year's space not the very birds
Can fare, so great and terrible it is.
But go now with thy galley and thy crew,
Or if thou hast a mind to fare by land,
My car and steeds are ready, and my sons
Are at thy service, and shall be thy guides
To goodly Lacedæmon, where he lives,
The fair-haired Menelaus. And do thou
Entreat him, that he tell thee utter truth.
Lie he will not, for he is very wise.'

He spoke. The sun set and the dark came on.
And 'mid them spake Athene, keen-eyed goddess :

' Old sir, thou hast indeed told all the tale
Aright. But come, cut out the victims' tongues,
And mix the wine, that having poured libations
Unto Poseidon and the other gods,
We may take thought of sleep ; for it is time.
See now, the light has gone below the west,
Nor is it seemly overlong to sit
At the gods' feast ; we should be on our way.'

So said Zeus' daughter ; they obeyed her words ;
Over their hands the heralds poured the water,
While pages filled the bowls brim-full of drink
And poured first in the cups libation-drops
And then served out to all. And on the fire
They cast the tongues, and standing up they poured
Drink-offerings on them, and when they had poured
And drunk to heart's content, then were the twain,
Athenes and godlike Telemachus,
Bent on returning to their hollow ship ;
But Nestor sought to hinder them, and said :

' Now Zeus forbend and all the other gods
Who live for ever, that ye should go from me
To your swift ship, as from a poor man's house,
Who lacketh raiment, nor hath rugs and blankets
In plenty in his house, whereon to sleep
Softly, his guests and he ! Not so ; I have
Rugs and good blankets by me. Never surely
Shall my friend's son, Odysseus' dear son, lie
On a ship-deck, while I am still alive
Or after me my sons are left at home
To welcome guests, if any chance to come.'

Then the keen-eyed Athenes answered him :
' Old friend, this speech of thine is good ; and for
Telemachus, 'tis meet that he obey thee,
For 'tis far better so. But while he goes
With thee to sleep inside thy house, will I

Get back to the black ship, to cheer the crew
And give them orders. For I claim to be
The only elder in their midst ; the rest
Are younger men who follow him for love,
All of high-souled Telémachus' own age.
There will I couch beside the black ship's hull
This night, but in the morning I will go
To the high-souled Cauconians, where a debt
('Tis neither new nor small) is owing to me.
But do thou speed my friend upon his way,
Since as a guest to thy house hath he come,
With thine own car and son, and give him horses,
The swiftest-paced and strongest that thou hast.'

With that keen-eyed Athene sped away
In form like a sea-eagle. Wonder fell
On all who saw it, and the old man marvelled
At what his eyes beheld. Then by the hand
He took Telemachus and spake and said :

' No fear have I, my friend, that thou wilt prove
Base or unmanly, since, boy as thou art,
The very gods thus go with thee for guides !
Truly none other is this of all those
Who dwell upon Olympus but Zeus' daughter,
Tritogeneia, maid most glorious,
Who honoured thy good father too among
The Argives. Nay, be gracious, queen, and grant
To me and to my sons and honoured wife
A good report, and I in turn to thee
Will offer up a broad-browed yearling heifer
Unbroke, that none hath led below the yoke.
Ay, such a heifer will I sacrifice
To thee, and gild her horns.'

So spake he praying, and Athene heard him.
Then the horse-lord, Gerenian Nestor, led them,
His sons and sons-in-law, to his fair house ;

And when they reached the prince's famous hall
They took their seats upon the chairs and settles
In rows, and at their coming the old man
Mixed them a bowl of wine sweet to the taste ;
'Twas more than ten years old when the housewife
Untied the stopper-string and opened it.
Thereof the old man made them mix a bowl,
And as he poured his offering prayed intently
To Pallas, maid of ægis-bearing Zeus.

Now when they had made libation and had drunk
To heart's content, they all went home to rest.
But the horse-lord, Gerenian Nestor, made
Telemachus, divine Odysseus' son,
Sleep there below the echoing portico
Upon a corded bed ; and posted by him
Peisistratus of the good ashen spear,
Leader of men, who of his sons alone
Lived in his halls unwed. But he himself
Slept in the inmost room of the high house
Beside his queenly wife, who had prepared
His bed for him.

Now soon as early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, Gerenian Nestor, lord of horses,
Started from bed, and coming forth sate down
On the smooth stones before his lofty doors,
White and well polished, whereon Neleus once,
Peer of the gods in counsel, used to sit.
But he ere this had felt the hand of fate
And gone to Hades' house, and in his turn,
Sceptre in hand, Gerenian Nestor sate,
The warder of the Achæans ; and around
His sons were gathered, coming from their rooms,
Perseus and Stratius and Echephron,
Arêtus, and the godlike Thrasymedes,
And sixth and last, the prince Peisistratus

Came. And they brought godlike Telemachus
And made him sit beside, and in their midst
First spake Gerenian Nestor, lord of horses :
‘ Now, good my lads, fulfil my wishes quickly ;
That first I may propitiate Athene
Of all the gods, who came to me clear-seen
At the sea-god’s rich feast. Now, one of you
Go fetch a heifer from the plain, and let her
Be brought right soon : the keeper of the herd
Should drive her ; and go, one, to the black ship
Of brave Telemachus, to call the crew,
All of them hither, leaving only two ;
And one go call goldsmith Laerces hither
To plate the heifer’s horns with gold ; and all
The rest stay here, and bid the maids indoors
Make a feast ready in our noble halls,
And fetch the seats, and logs to lay about
The altar, either side, and bring clear water.’

So said he, and they all were busy. First
The cow came from the pasture, and there came
The comrades of great-heart Telemachus
From the ship, swift and trim ; then came the smith,
His tools in hand, the weapons of his craft,
Anvil and hammer and tough tongs, wherewith
He worked the gold ; ay, and Athene came
To take her offering. Nestor, that old knight,
Gave the smith gold, and with his craft he laid it
On the cow’s horns, to gratify the goddess
When she beheld her offering. Stratius
And goodly Echephron held by the horns
The cow, and from his room Arêtus came
With washing-water in a flowered basin,
His left hand holding barley in a basket ;
And Thrasymedes, steadfast in the fight,
Stood by, keen axe in hand, to fell the heifer,

While Perseus held a bowl to catch the blood.
Then Nestor, the old knight, began the rites,
Washings of hands and scatterings of grain,
And strongly prayed Athene, and cutting first
A lock of the head, he tossed it in the fire.

Now when they had prayed and tossed the barley
Then Thrasymedes, Nestor's gallant son, [grains,
Stood by and struck : the sinews of the neck
The axe shore through and loosed the heifer's strength ;
Whereat the women—Nestor's gracious wife,
Eurydice, eldest child of Clymenus,
With Nestor's sons' wives and his daughters—raised
The ritual cry ; and then the men upreared
The heifer's head above the broad-wayed earth
And held it, while the chief Peisistratus
Severed the throat. When the dark blood had run,
And life had left the bones, then speedily
They cut her up, and duly separated
All the thigh-flesh, and wrapt the same in fat,
A double layer, and laid raw flesh thereon ;
And these the old man burned upon the billets
And poured the red wine o'er them, while beside him
The young men held in hand five-pointed forks.
And when the thigh-pieces were wholly burned
And they had tasted of the inner meat,
They cut the rest up small and spitted it
And broiled it on the pointed spits they held.

Meanwhile fair Polycaste, youngest daughter
Of Nestor, gave Telemachus his bath ;
And when she had bathed and had anointed him
With oil, she wrapped about him a fine cloak
And tunic, and he came forth from the bath
Like one of the immortals. So he went
And sate by Nestor, shepherd of the people.

Now when they had roasted all the outer flesh

And pulled it off the spits, they sate and feasted ;
And good men waited on them, pouring wine
Into the golden cups. And when they had had
Their hearts' content of meat and drink, then first
Gerenian Nestor, lord of horses, spake :

' Come ye, my boys, bring for Telemachus
The fair-maned steeds and yoke them to the car
That he may get forth on his way.'

So said he, and they gave good heed at once
And hearkened ; and they yoked the speedy steeds
Soon to the car. And the house stewardess
Set bread and wine and dainties in the car,
Such food as kings, Zeus' foster-children, eat.
Then climbed Telemachus on the fine car,
And with him Nestor's son, Peisistratus,
Leader of men, and took the reins in hand.
He flicked the steeds to start, and, nothing loath,
The pair sped onward to the plain, and left
Pylos' steep citadel. So all day long
They tossed the yoke that both bore on their necks.

Now the sun set and all the ways grew dark.
And they arrived at Pheræ, at the house
Of Diocles, son of Ortilochus,
Son of Alpheus ; there they spent the night,
And as his guests he gave them entertainment.

But when the early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, they yoked the horses and they mounted
The inlaid car, and drove forth from the gate
And echoing portico. He flicked the steeds
To start ; and nothing loath, the pair sped on.
So came they to the cornfields of the plain,
And thence pressed on toward their journey's end ;
So well those speedy horses bore them on.

And the sun set and all the ways grew dark.

BOOK IV .

'To Lacedæmon's hollow land they came
'Mid the ravines, and drove up to the house
Of splendid Menelaus. Him they found
Giving a marriage feast within his house
To many kinsmen, for his noble son
And daughter. Now his daughter he was sending
Unto Achilles the man-breaker's son,
For in the land of Troy he first had promised
And pledged himself to give her ; and the gods
Were now accomplishing the wedding ; so
With steeds and chariots was he sending her
To the famed city of the Myrmidons,
O'er whom her lord was king. But for his son
Alector's daughter was he bringing home
From Sparta, even for his well-loved son,
Strong Megapenthes, of a slave-girl born ;
For unto Helen did the gods no longer
Grant issue, after she had borne her first,
That lovely child Hermione, as fair
As golden Aphrodite. Thus were they
At feast within the massive, vaulted hall,
Neighbours and kin of splendid Menelaus,
All making merry ; and among them was
A holy minstrel singing to his lyre,
And down the line, as he began his song,
A pair of acrobats went whirling by them.

Now at the palace-gate the twain, the prince
Telemachus and Nestor's gallant son,
They and their hōrses halted ; and the lord
Eteoneus went outside and saw them there,

The nimble squire of splendid Menelaus ;
And passed into the hall to tell the news
Unto the shepherd of the people. So
Close up he came and spake with wingéd words .

‘ O Menelaus, foster-child of Zeus,
Here are two strangers, men who have a look
Of great Zeus’ children. Say, shall we unyoke
Their fiery steeds for them, or send them on
To some one else to give them entertainment ? ’

Then, sorely vexed, spake fair-haired Menelaus :
‘ Thou wert not wont of old to be a fool,
O Eteoneus Boethoides,
But now thou talkest folly like a child !
Surely at hands of other men we two
Oft ate the bread of welcome, ere we came here
In hopes that Zeus would give us for the future
Respite from pain. Go, loose the strangers’ horses,
And bring the men here forward to the feast.’

At that his liegeman scurried from the hall,
And called the other nimble squires to follow.
They loosed the sweating horses from the yoke
And tied them up there at the horses’ stalls,
And tossed before them spelt, and with it mixed
White barley ; and they tilted up the car
By the bright gateway walls, and led the guests
Inside the heavenly hall. In wonder they
Gazed as they crossed the sacred king’s abode :
For on great Menelaus’ vaulted house
There lit a gleam as of the sun or moon ;
But when they had satisfied their eyes with gazing
They went into the polished baths and bathed.

Now when the maids had bathed and rubbed them
With oil, and cast about them fleecy cloaks [down
And tunics, they sate down on chairs beside
Atrides Menelaus. Then a handmaid

Brought water for their hands in a gold ewer,
And poured it forth above a silver basin
For them to wash ; and at their side she placed
A polished table, and a grave dame brought
And set before them bread and many dainties,
Providing generously of what she had ;
While he that carved took up and served to them
Plates of all kinds of meat, and set by them
Goblets of gold. Then fair-haired Menelaus
Greeted the twain and said :

‘ Taste, and be glad of food ; and then, when ye
Have supped, we will ask who among men ye are ;
For not lost in you is your father’s blood,
But ye are of the breed of sceptred kings,
The fosterlings of Zeus : for base-born men
Could not get sons like you.’

And, saying this, he took and set before them
The fat roast ox-chine, which by way of honour
Had to himself been served , and they stretched out
Their hands to the good fare arrayed before them.
And when they had had their fill of meat and drink,
Then spake Telemachus to Nestor’s son,
Head close to head, that others might not hear :

‘ Mark, son of Nestor, comrade of my heart,
The flash of bronze adown these echoing halls,
Of gold and amber, ivory and silver.
Methinks the courtyard of Olympian Zeus
Must look like this ; such prodigality
Is here ; I am astonished as I look.’

Now fair-haired Menelaus heard his saying,
And spake and said to him with wingéd words :

‘ With Zeus, my lads, no mortal man may vie,
For deathless are his homes and his possessions ;
But among men there may or may not be
One who can match my wealth. For, true it is

That after many woes and wanderings
I brought my wealth home in my ships, and came
In the eighth year. I wandered over Cyprus,
Phœnicia, and Egypt, and I reached
The Ethiops and Sidonians and Erembi
And Libya, where the lambs are horned at birth.
There thrice in the full circle of the year
The ewes bear young, and ne'er a master there
Nor shepherd lacks sweet milk or cheese or meat ;
But milk unfailingly the mothers yield
All through the year. While in those lands I roamed
Amassing wealth, another slew by stealth
My brother unawares, through treachery
Of his accurséd wife. So, look you now,
No joy have I as master of this wealth ;
And well may ye have heard this from your fathers,
Whoe'er they be, seeing I suffered much
And let a well-found house go all to ruin,
Containing great possessions. Would I dwelt
At home with only one third part of it,
And that my friends were safe, who died of old
Far in wide Troy from Argos, home of horses !
And yet—as in my halls I often sit,
Weeping and grieving for them all—awhile
I ease my heart with weeping, and awhile
I cease, for chilly sorrow quickly palls—
For all my grief I mourn not for all those
As much as for one man, the thought of whom
Makes sleep and food alike repugnant to me.
For no one toiled so greatly of the Achæans
As toiled and strove Odysseus. Yet for him,
It seems, was woe his portion ; but for me,
Sorrow for him that never can be soothed,
So long he is from home and naught we know
If he be dead or living. Ay, they must:

Be mourning for him, true Penelope
And old Laertes and Telemachus,
Whom but a new-born babe he left behind.'

His words awoke within the young man's breast
A yearning to lament his sire. He dropped
A tear to hear his father spoken of,
And held up with both hands his purple cloak
Before his eyes ; and Menelaus marked him,
And pondered in his mind and in his heart
Whether to let him speak first of his father,
Or question him and prove him point by point.

While thus he pondered in his mind and heart,
Came Helen from her fragrant lofty room,
Like Artemis with spindle all of gold.
With her Adraste came, and set in place
A beautifully-fashioned chair for her ;
Alcippe brought a wrapper of soft wool,
And Phylo bore a silver basket, which
Alcandre gave her, wife of Polybus,
Who dwelt in Thebes of Egypt, where the houses
Have greatest store of wealth. Two silver baths,
A pair of tripods and ten golden talents
He gave to Menelaus, and besides
His wife gave Helen also lovely things—
A golden distaff and a silver basket
On wheels, whereof the rims were edged with gold.
'Twas this the handmaid Phylo set beside her,
Full of spun yarn, and balanced on it lay
A distaff charged with violet-blue wool.

So on her chair, a footstool 'neath her feet,
She sate, and instantly began to ask
Her husband the whole matter.

' Well, Menelaus, foster-child of Zeus,
Now do we know who these men claim to be,
Who have come here to our house ? Shall I dissemble,

Or tell the truth ? My instinct bids me tell it.
I say I have never seen a man so like,
Nor yet a woman (as mine eyes behold him,
I am amazed) as yonder youth is like
Great-heart Odysseus' son, Telemachus,
Whom but a new-born babe he left at home,
When ye Achæans for my shameless sake
Came against Troy with bold war in your hearts.'

Then fair-haired Menelaus answered her .
' Now, lady, do I also mark the likeness
E'en as thou notest it. Odysseus' feet
And hands were just like his, and head and hair,
And glances of his eyes. And even now,
As I was calling him to mind and saying
What toils and sorrows he endured for me,
A bitter tear fell from the stranger's lids,
And o'er his eyes he held his purple cloak.'

Then Nestor's son, Peisistratus, replied :
' Atrides Menelaus, nursed of Zeus,
Thou captain of the hosts, indeed this youth
Is truly, as thou sayest, that man's son.
But he is modest and feels shame at heart
To make a show of too much talk, at his
First coming face to face with thee, whose voice
Delights us both as might a god's. But me
Gerenian Nestor, lord of horses, sent
Forth with him as a guide ; for he desired
To see thee, in the hope that thou might'st put
Some word or deed into his heart ; because
A son has many troubles in his home,
His father absent, if he have no others
To help ; as now 'tis with Telemachus.
His father is away ; nor hath he others
Among the town-folk to keep mischief off.'

Then fair-haired Menelaus answered him :

‘ See now ! there hath in truth come to my house
The son of a great friend, who for my sake
Endured much toil ; and if he came, I thought
To welcome him beyond all other Argives,
If Zeus the Olympian, of the far-borne voice,
Had let us both return across the brine
In our swift ships. I would have given him
For home a town in Argos, built his house,
Emptied some city for him, out of those
That lie around and own me for their lord,
When I had brought him out of Ithaca,
Him with his goods, his son, and all his people.
And here would we have lived and met together
Often, and nothing should have parted us,
Both entertaining and both entertained,
Till the black cloud of death enfolded us.
But, it must be, some very god was jealous
Of such a consummation, who deprived
That luckless man alone of his return.’

He spoke, and in them all he touched the springs
Of sorrow. Argive Helen, sprung from Zeus,
Wept, and Telemachus and Menelaus ;
Nor could the son of Nestor keep his eyes
From tears. For he remembered in his heart
Unstained Antilochus, whom the bright son
Of radiant Dawn had slain ; with him in mind
He spake in wingéd words :

‘ Ah, son of Atreus ! Nestor, that old man,
Was ever wont to say of thee that thou
Wert wise beyond all men, whenever we
Mentioned thy name and questioned one another
Within his halls. And now, if it may be,
Hearken to me ; for mine own part, I have
No pleasure in laments at supper-time ;
Indeed, the early dawn will soon be on us.

Not that I count it blame at all to weep
For any man who has died and met his fate.
Nay, this is the one due that we can pay
To wretched human-kind, to shear the hair
And let the cheeks drop tears. I too have lost
A brother dead, nowise the worst of all
The Argives, and belike thou knewest him.
As for myself, I never met nor saw him,
But men say that Antilochus surpassed
All others, both in speed of foot and fighting.

Then fair-haired Menelaus made him answer :
' Friend, thou hast said all that a man of wisdom
Might say or do, though of more years than thou ;
For thou art born of such a sire, that e'en
Thy words are wise. Easy it is to know
The seed of any man for whom Cronion
Has spun good luck at bridal and at birth ,
E'en as he now hath granted unto Nestor
Through all his days continually to reach
A sleek old age at home, and see his sons
In their turn wise and very mighty spearmen !
Well, let us cease the weeping that was made
Just now, and turn our thoughts again to supper.
And bid them pour the water o'er our hands.
Tales there will be to-morrow morning also
For us to tell, Telemachus and me,
Each to the other, even to the end.'

At that, great Menelaus' nimble squire
Asphalion poured the water o'er their hands,
And they reached out to the good fare before them.

Then Helen, sprung from Zeus, had a new thought.
Anon she cast into the wine whereof
They drank a drug to lull all pain and anger,
And bring forgetfulness of every ill.
Whoso should drink it down, when it had been

Mixed in the bowl, for that whole day at least
Would shed no tear, no, not if both his parents
Were lying dead, nor if before his eyes
Men put his son or brother to the sword
And he himself looked on. Such cunning drugs
Of healing had Zeus' daughter, given to her
By Thon's wife, Polydamna, dame of Egypt,
Where earth, grain-giver, in profusion yields
Herbs, many that are wholesome in the cup
And many that are baneful. There each man
Is a physician, skilled o'er all men else,
For they are of the stock of Paeon.
Now when she had cast the drug in and had bidden
The servants pour the wine forth, once again
She made reply and said :

' Atrides Menelaus, nursed of Zeus,
And all ye sons of nobles present here,
Since Zeus the god-head giveth good and evil
Now to this man, now that (for unto him
All things are possible), sit ye down now
In hall and feast ye, and amuse yourselves
With telling tales ; for I have one to tell
That fits the time. Not I could tell or name
The whole of all Odysseus' many ventures,
That steadfast heart ! But what a deed he did
And how he showed endurance, mighty man,
There in the Trojans' land where ye Achæans
Were plagued ! With sordid stripes he marred himself,
And with a sorry rag about his shoulders
He entered the broad-streeted foeman city
Like a house-slave ; and there he hid himself
In a new guise, a beggar, he who was
Of none such sort by the Achæans' ships.
He traversed in that guise the Trojans' city
And none took note of him. But I alone

Knew him in his disguise and questioned him,
And cunningly he sought to put me off.
Howbeit at last, when I was bathing him
And rubbing him with oil, and gave him clothes,
And swore a mighty oath too not to make him
Known for Odysseus to the Trojans till
He had reached the swift ships and the huts, at last
He told me all the purpose of the Achæans.
Then after slaying many of the Trojans
With the long sword, back to the Greeks he went
And carried much intelligence. Thereat
The other Trojan women wailed aloud,
But glad my soul was, for my heart already
Was turned to go back home again, and I
Bewailed the blindness Aphrodite gave me,
What time she led me from mine own dear land
To Troy, abandoning alike my daughter
And my bride-chamber and my lord, a man
Who lacked no whit of wisdom or of beauty.'

Then fair-haired Menelaus answered her :
' Yea, all this, lady, thou hast said aright.
Ere now I have learned the counsel and the thought
Of many warriors, and gone wide o'er earth,
But never have mine eyes beheld a man
Of such a heart as resolute Odysseus.
And what another feat that stout man did,
And how he bore it in the carven horse,
Wherein we all, chiefs of the Argives, sate
Conveying to the Trojans death and doom !
Then thither camest thou. It must have been
Some god enjoined thee, who desired to grant
The Trojans glory ; ay, and with thee came
Godlike Deiphobus ; thrice didst thou go
About the hollow ambush, handling it,
And calledst on the Danaan chiefs by name,

Making thy voice like voices of the wives
Of all the Argives. Tydeus' son and I
And good Odysseus in the midst were sitting
And heard how thou didst call. We two indeed
Were keen to jump up and come out or answer
From inside then and there ; but he, Odysseus,
Checked us and stayed us, eager though we were.
Then all the other sons of the Achæans
Kept quiet ; but alone Anticlus wished
To speak and answer thee ; but with strong hands
Odysseus closed his mouth relentlessly
And so saved all the Achæans, holding him
Until Athene led thee from the place.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Atrides Menelaus, nursed of Zeus,
Thou captain of the hosts—'tis harder so !
For all this courage no wise warded off
His piteous doom, not though the heart within him
Had been of iron. Come, send us to bed,
So that beneath the spell of sleep at last
We may repose us and be comforted.'

So spake he. Argive Helen bade the maids
Set bedsteads in the cloister, and spread out
Fine purple blankets on them, and to lay
Upon them coverlets, and on those to put
Thick fleecy cloaks for covering over all.
So, torch in hand, forth from the hall they went
And strewed the couches ; and a herald showed
The guests the way. So there they slept, the prince
Telemachus, and Nestor's gallant son
Within the fore-hall of the house ; howbeit
In the mid chamber of the lofty house
Atrides slumbered, and beside him lay
The long-robed Helen, star of womankind.

But soon as early, rosy-fingered Dawn

Appeared, then from his bed rose Menelaus,
Good at the war-cry ; and he donned his clothes,
And slung his keen sword round about his shoulder,
And 'neath his smooth feet tied his goodly sandals
And went forth through the chamber, like a god
To meet ; and by Telemachus he sate
And spake and hailed him :

‘ What need hath brought thee, prince Telemachus,
Here to fair Sparta o’er the broad sea-backs ?
Is it a public matter, or thine own ?
Tell me the truth thereof.’

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
‘ Atrides Menelaus, nursed of Zeus,
Thou captain of the hosts, I came to see
If thou couldst give me tidings of my father.
My home is being devoured and my rich farms
Are being ruined, and my house is full
Of men who hate me and are ever slaying
My mob of sheep and rolling, shambling kine—
The suitors of my mother, overweening
In insolence. Now therefore am I come
Unto thy knees, if haply thou art willing
To tell me of his piteous ending, whether
Perchance thine eyes beheld it, or thou hast
Heard from some other wanderer the tale.
For to exceeding grief his mother bore him.
And do thou nowise out of ruth or pity,
Speak soothing words, but tell me plainly how
Thou camest to behold him. Ah, I beg thee,
If e’er my father, good Odysseus promised
Thee aught of word or deed, and made it good
There in the land of Troy, where ye Achæans
Endured affliction, mind thee of it now,
I pray, and let me have the very truth.’

Then sorely wroth spake fair-haired Menelaus :

‘To think that in a valiant hero’s bed
They, cowards that they are, aspired to lie !
E’en as when in a mighty lion’s lair
A hind has bedded her new fawns unweaned,
And roams the mountain slopes and grassy vales
In search of food, and then the lion comes
Home to his lair, and looses on the twain
An ugly death ; so shall Odysseus loose
An ugly death upon the suitors. Would,
O Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo,
That, in such strength as when he rose up once
In stately Lesbos for a wrestling match
And threw Philomeleides mightily,
And all the Greeks rejoiced—would that Odysseus,
As then he was, might come upon the suitors !
Then swift should be the doom of all of them,
And harsh their mating ! But in this that thou
Dost ask and seek of me, I will not swerve
To speak of other things, nor will I cheat thee ;
But whatsoe’er the old man of the sea,
Who cannot lie, declared to me, thereof
I will not hide nor keep one word from thee.

‘Impatient as I was to journey hither,
The gods still kept me back in Egypt, since
I had not offered them the hecatombs
That win fulfilment, and they ever wished
That men should mind their orders. Now there lies
In front of Egypt ’mid the surging sea
An island men call Pharos, as far off
As in one day a hollow ship can run
When fair behind her blows the piping breeze ;
And therein a fair haven, whence men launch
The shapely ships into the deep, when they
Have taken aboard their water from deep wells.
There the gods kept me twenty days, and ne’er

A breath of seaward winds came all that time
That carry ships across the broad sea-backs.
And now had all our stores and my men's strength
Been spent, but that a goddess pitied me
And rescued me. This was Eidothea, daughter
Of mighty Proteus, old man of the sea.
Her heart had I above all others moved.
She met me as I wandered all alone,
Leaving my men, who roamed incessantly
About the island, fishing with bent hooks,
For hunger gnawed their bellies ; and she came
Close by and spake aloud and said to me :

“ Art thou so very stupid, sir, and dull,
Or wilfully remiss and relishing
Discomfort ? What a long time hast thou been
Pent in this island, and canst find no issue
Therefrom, and thy men's hearts are growing faint ! ”

‘ So said she, and I answered her and said :
“ I will speak out and tell thee, whosoe'er
Of goddesses thou art, that I am held
Nowise of mine own will, but it must be
That I have sinned against the eternal gods
Who hold wide heaven. Howbeit tell thou me—
For gods know all things—which of the immortals
Fetters me here and stays me from my path ;
And touching my return, how I may fare
Across the fishy deep.”

‘ At once the radiant goddess answered me :
“ Yea, truly, stranger, will I tell thee all.
This is the haunt of that old man o' the sea,
Proteus of Egypt, that immortal one
Who cannot lie : Poseidon's underling
He is, and knows the depths of every sea.
And him they call my father that begat me.
If somehow thou couldst lie in wait for him

And catch him, he will tell thee of thy way,
The measure of thy path, and thy returning,
And how to fare across the fishy deep—
Yea, he will tell thee, fosterling of Zeus,
If so thou wilt, what hath been wrought of good
Or evil in thy halls, while thou hast been
Away upon thy long and grievous journey.”

‘ So said she, and I answered her and said :
“ Plan thou thyself now means to lie in wait
For this divine old man, lest haply he
See or become aware of me too soon
And so avoid me : for a god is hard
For mortal man to master.”

‘ At once the radiant goddess answered me :
“ Yea, truly, stranger, will I tell thee all.
Whene’er the sun bestrides the peak of heaven
That ancient of the sea who cannot lie
Comes at the breath of Zephyr from the brine,
In the dark ripple hidden. Stepping forth,
He makes his bed beneath the hollow caves,
And round him in a herd sleep all the seals—
The brood of the fair daughter of the salt—
From the grey water risen ; and they breathe
A bitter odour of the salt sea-deeps.
Here will I bring thee at the streak of dawn,
And bed you all in order—for do thou
Pick out three comrades of the best thou hast
Aboard thy sturdy ships. Now I must tell thee
All that old man’s dark ways. First he will count
His seals, and go his rounds, and when he hath
Done his five-fingering and looked them o’er,
Then will he lie among them, like a shepherd
Amid his flocks ; and in that instant when
Ye see him laid to rest, then, then call up
Your strength and courage ; hold him then and there,

Howe'er he fights and struggles to escape.
For try he will ; ay, take all sorts of shapes
Of things that creep upon the earth, of water,
Or of amazing fire. But grip him firmly
And squeeze him yet the more, and when at last
He questions thee in his own shape, as when
Ye saw him laid to rest, why then restrain
Thy strength, O prince, and let the old man go,
And ask him which of the gods is wroth with thee,
And touching thy return, how thou shalt fare
Across the fishy deep."

' With that she dived beneath the surging sea
But I went to the galleys where they stood
Upon the sand, and as I went my heart
Was troubled darkly. But when I had come
Down to the ship and sea, and we had got
Our supper, and immortal night came on,
Then down we lay to rest on the sea-shore.
And when the early, rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, in that same hour I walked along
Beside the wide-wayed sea, and prayed the gods
Intently ; and I took three comrades, whom
I trusted most for any enterprise.

' Meanwhile below the sea's broad bosom she
Had plunged, and from the deep had brought the skins
Of four sea-calves, and all were newly flayed ;
For she was minded to entrap her father.
And having scooped out lairs in the sea-sand,
She sate awaiting us , and we came near,
And she in order made us all lie down
And cast a skin o'er each. Then would our ambush
Have been most awful, for the deadly stink
Of sea-bred seals distressed us horribly ;
For who would have a sea-beast for bed-mate ?
But she herself delivered us and thought

Of a great antidote : she brought and set
'Neath each man's nose ambrosia very sweet
Of scent, and killed the savour of the beast.
All through the morn with fortitude we waited,
And out the seals came trooping from the sea.
In rows along the shore they laid them down ;
And from the sea at noon the old man came,
And found his fatted seals and looked them o'er,
And numbered them ; and first among the beasts
He counted us, and never guessed at all
There was a trap ; and last he lay down too
Then with a shout we made a rush at him
And threw our arms round him ; and the old man
Remembered all his tricks. Why, first of all
He turned into a bearded lion, then
Into a snake, a leopard, a huge boar,
And then he changed to running water ; then
To a great leafy tree ; but undismayed
We kept our grip on him ; and when in time
The dark old wizard wearied, then at last
He questioned me and said :

“ Which of the gods, O son of Atreus, was it
Took counsel with thee, that thou mightest lie
In wait and capture me against my will ?
What hast thou need of ? ”

‘ So said he, and I answered him and said :
“ Old man, thou know'st—why puttest thou me by
With such a question ?—how I am long since
Pent in this island and can find no end,
And fails my heart within me ; but say thou—
For gods know all things—which of the immortals
Fetters me here and stays me from my path ;
And touching my return, how I may fare
Across the fishy deep ? ”

‘ So said I, and at once he answered me :

“Nay, surely ’twas thy duty to have made
To Zeus and all the gods fair sacrifice
Before embarking, that thou mightest come
With all speed to thy country, sailing o’er
The wine-dark sea. For it is not thy fate
To see thy friends and reach thy well-built house
And native land, till thou hast once more gone
To Egypt’s water, that sky-nurtured river,
And offered to the deathless gods who hold
Wide heaven holy hecatombs. Then shall
They grant to thee the path of thy desire.”

‘So said he, but my heart was broken in me,
For that he bade me fare again to Egypt
Across the misty deep, a long, hard way.
Yet for all that I answered him and said :

“Old man, all this according to thy bidding
I will perform ; but come now, tell me this
And speak it surely. Did all those Achæans
Whom, when we came from Troy, Nestor and I
Left there, return home safely with their ships ?
Did any die an unexpected death
Aboard his ship, or in the arms of friends,
When he had wound up all the skein of war ?”

‘So said I, and he answered me at once :
“Why, son of Atreus, dost thou press me thus ?
Not for thy good it is to know, nor learn
My knowledge ; when thou hear’st it all, I think
Thou wilt be soon in tears. For many of them
Were slain, and many left ; but only two
Of the mail-clad Achæans’ chiefs were lost
On their way home (as for the fighting, thou
Wert there thyself), and yet a third, methinks.
Survives, and is detained on the wide sea.

“Aias in truth amid his long-oared ships
Was lost. On Gyræ’s mighty rocks Poseidon

Wrecked him at first, but saved him from the sea,
And though Athene hated him, he would have
Escaped his doom, but in his utter folly
He blurted out a boast. 'Despite the gods',
Said he, 'I have escaped the great sea-gulf.'
Poseidon heard his braggart words; anon
He took the trident in his massy hands
And smote and clave in twain the rock of Gyræ.
One piece abode in place; the other fragment,
Whereon was Aias sitting at the first
Before he lost his wits, fell in the sea
And bore him down into the vast abyss
Of billows; so he met his end there when
He swallowed the salt water.

'As for thy brother, he, I wot, escaped
The fates and shunned them in his hollow ships;
For queenly Hera saved him. Yet when he
Was like to reach Malea's mountain scarp,
The tempest caught him up and carried him,
Bewailing loudly, o'er the fishy deep
Unto the limit of the land where once
Thyestes dwelt, but now Thyestes' son,
Ægisthus lived. And when from there likewise
A safe return was showed him, and the gods
Shifted the wind to fair, and home they came,
Then truly Agamemnon with great joy
Set foot on his own earth, and clasped the soil
And kissed it; and his tears fell fast and hot,
So glad he was to see his land again.
But from his place of watch a sentry saw him,
Whom treacherous Ægisthus brought and posted
And promised him for pay two golden talents.
He had been watching one whole year, for fear
The king should slip by him unseen, and call
To mind his fighting strength: so to the house

He went to tell the shepherd of the people.
At once Ægisthus planned a crafty trap.
A score of the best men in all the land
He chose, and set an ambush, while he bade
Prepare a feast within, across the hall.
Then out he set with chariot and horse,
Plotting an infamy, to welcome home
King Agamemnon, shepherd of the people ;
And brought him up unconscious of his doom
And feasted him, and slew him as one slays
An ox at stall. And of Atrides' men
Who followed him not one was left alive,
Nor of Ægisthus' men ; but all were slain
Inside the palace."

' So said he, but my heart was broken in me,
And sitting on the sand I wept. My soul
No more had any wish to live or see
The sunlight ; but when I had had my full
Of tears and rolling on the ground, then said
That old man of the sea, who cannot lie :

' " Enough, Atrides—weep thou not so long
Unceasing ; for therein we find no help.
Nay, rather strive with all the speed thou mayst
To come to thine own land ; for either thou
Wilt find Ægisthus living, or perchance
Orestes may have been before and slain him,
And thou mayst light upon his funeral feast."

' So said he, and my heart and lordly spirit,
For all my grief, grew warm again within me,
And unto him I spake with wingéd words :

' " Of these men now I know ; but do thou name
That third. Who is he that is living yet
And is detained on the broad sea, or else
Is dead ? I fain would hear, despite my grief.'

' So said I, and at once he answered me :

“Laertes’ son it is, who hath his home
In Ithaca. Him in an isle I saw,
Sore weeping in the nymph Calypso’s house
Who keeps him there perforce. He cannot come
To his own land, for he hath neither ships
With oars at hand, nor crew who might convey him
Upon his way across the broad sea-backs.
But for thyself, Zeus-nurtured Menelaus,
Thou art not doomed to die and meet thy fate
In Argos, nurse of horses ; but the gods
Will send thee on to the Elysian plain
And the world’s end, where fair-haired Rhadamanthus
Dwells, and where life is easiest for men.
There comes not snow, nor any rain, nor yet
Great storms, but ever ocean sends the breeze
Of Zephyr singing shrilly, to blow cool
On men ; for thou hast Helen unto wife,
And they look on thee as Zeus’ son by marriage.”

‘With that he dived below the surging sea.
But to the ships with my brave mates I went
And as I went my heart was troubled darkly.
But when we came down to the ship and sea
And had prepared our meal, immortal night
Came on, and down we lay upon the beach.
But soon as early, rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, then first of all we dragged the ships
To the bright salt, and set the masts and sails
In the trim ships, and then the crews likewise
Embarked and manned the thwarts, and sitting well
In order smote the grey sea with their oars.
And back again in Egypt’s sky-fed river
I moored my ships, and paid the hecatombs
That win fulfilment. But when I had stayed
The anger of the everlasting gods,
I piled a mound to Agamemnon, that

His fame should burn for ever. Now when I
Had made an end thereof, I set out home,
And the immortals sent me a fair wind,
And sped me swiftly to mine own dear land.
But come now, tarry thou here in my halls
Till the eleventh day or twelfth be come ;
Then will I send thee forth in state, and give thee
Right kingly gifts, three horses and a car
Well-polished, and a noble cup besides,
That thou mayst pour to the immortal gods
And have me in remembrance, all thy days.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Atrides, do not keep me here too long '
For I should be content to sit with thee
A whole year long, and no desire for home
Or parents would come on me, for I take
Amazing pleasure in thy tales and talk.
But even now my men in sacred Pylos
Are chafing, and thou keepest me full long.
So whatsoever thou wouldst give me, make it
Something to treasure. Horses will I not
Take off to Ithaca, but will leave them here
To gladden thee thyself ; for thou art master
Of a wide plain, that grows abundant clover
And wheat and rye and broad-eared barley white
And lucerne. But in Ithaca there are
No roomy courses and no meads at all ;
A pasture land of goats it is, and far
More pleasant than horse-pasture : of the isles
That lean upon the sea, not one is fit
For driving horses or abounds in meadows,
And Ithaca least of all.'

He spake, and Menelaus of the war-cry
Smiled and caressed him with his hand, and said :
' Thou art of noble blood, dear lad, that thus

Thou speakest. Therefore will I change these gifts,
As well I can. Of all the gifts that are
Laid up as treasures in my house, will I
Give thee the fairest and most costly one.
My gift shall be a bowl, a masterpiece
Of solid silver with gold-plated rims,
Hephæstus' handiwork. Prince Phædimus,
The King of the Sidonians, gave it me,
When in his house I stayed on my way home,
And now it is my wish to give it thee.'

So talked they with each other, while the guests
Came to the high king's palace. They were driving
Sheep, and were bearing wine that makes men glad,
And bread was sent them by their fine-veiled wives.
So they made busy o'er the feast in hall.

Meanwhile, before the dwelling of Odysseus,
The suitors in their pride amused themselves
With throwing quoits and spears in a flat space,
As was their wont. And their two chiefs sate there,
Antinous and godlike Eurymachus,
In courage far the best of all the suitors.
To them Noemon, son of Phronius, came
And put a question to Antinous :

' Antinous, have we now or have we not
An inkling when Telemachus will come
From sandy Pylos ? With a ship of mine
He has gone off, and I have need of her
To cross to spacious Elis, where I have
A dozen brood mares ; at the teat there are
Stout mules unbroken, and I want to catch
And break in one of them.'

So said he, and they marvelled, never thinking
Telemachus was gone to Neleus' Pylos,
But deeming him there somewhere on the farm,
Either among his flocks or with the swineherd.

Then said Antinous, Eupheithes' son :
' Tell me the truth, when did he go and with him
The youths that went—who were they ? Chosen men
Of Ithaca, or his own churls and slaves ?
(Why, yes, he might have managed even that !)
And tell me this exactly, that I may
Be sure—was it by force, against thy wish,
He took thy black ship off, or of free will
Because he begged it of thee, didst thou give it ? '

Noemon, son of Phronius, answered him .
' Freely I gave it him. What was a man
To do, when such as he in trouble of mind
Begged for a favour ? To deny the gift
Were hard. The noblest youths in all the land
After ourselves, e'en these have gone with him.
I recognized their leader going aboard,
Mentor, or else a god entirely like him.
But one thing puzzles me : here yesterday
At early dawn I saw the goodly Mentor,
And yet by that time he had sailed for Pylos.'

With that he went off to his father's house.
But the proud spirits of the twain were angered.
They made the suitors sit down in a group
And stop their games ; and in displeasure spake
Antinous, Eupheithes' son, to them
(His darkling heart was nigh to burst with rage
And his two eyes were like a flaming fire):

' Confound him ! 'Tis a desperate deed, this journey,
Telemachus hath dared ! We never thought
He would accomplish it. The lad is gone,
Gone without more ado, despite us all,
Launching a ship and picking out the best
Men in the land : he will begin to cause us
More trouble yet : may Zeus undo his strength
For him, before he grows a man ! But come,

Give me a speedy ship and twenty men,
That I may lie in wait for his returning,
Patrolling in the strait 'twixt rugged Samos
And Ithaca ; so shall his seafaring
After his father have a sorry end.*

So said he, and they all applauded him
And bade him do it ; and anon they all
Rose up and went into Odysseus' house.

Now 'twas not long before Penelope
Learned of the plan the suitors had devised
Deep in their hearts, because the herald Medon
Told her. He was outside the court and heard
Their counsels, as they wove their plot inside :
And through the house he went his way to tell
Penelope the news ; but as he came
Down from the step, Penelope said to him :

' Why have the lordly suitors sent thee forth ?
Was it to tell divine Odysseus' maids
To cease from work, and get their banquet ready ?
O, would that they had finished with their wooings
And meetings once for all, and here were supping
Their last and latest now ! Ye who forgather
So oft and waste such store, the heritage
Of wise Telemachus, what, heard ye not,
When children from your fathers long ago,
What sort of man Odysseus was among them,
In that he did no wrong by word or deed
To any man throughout the land, as is
The way of high-born kings ? A king is sure
To hate one man, though he may love another.
But he did never act with arrogance
Toward any man at all. Nay, but your temper
And your unseemly deeds are plain ; ye have
No gratitude for ancient kindnesses.'

Then Medon the wise-minded answered her :

‘Would that, O queen, this were the greatest evil !
But ’tis a thing far bigger and more grievous
The suitors mean—may Zeus, I pray, annul it !
They are intent to slay Telemachus
With the sharp sword, upon his homeward way,
For he hath gone for tidings of his father
To sacred Pylos and fair Lacedæmon.’

So said he. There and then her knees were loosed
And her heart failed ; a long time she was dumb.
Her eyes were filled with tears, her flow of speech
Was stayed ; and yet at last she answered him .
‘ Why, herald, is my boy gone forth ? He had
No need to go on board swift-going ships,
That serve men as the horses of the deep
And cross the great wet waste. Ah, was it that
There should be left not e’en his name ’mid men ? ’

Then Medon the wise-minded answered her :
‘ I cannot tell if some god spurred him on,
Or if his own heart stirred him up to go
To Pylos, to seek tidings of his father,
His coming-home, or else what death he died.’

With that he went off through Odysseus’ house ;
But soul-consuming sorrow clouded her.
She could not bear to rest upon a seat,
Of all the many there ; but down she sank
Upon the threshold of the fair-built room
Moaning most piteously, and round about her
Whimpered her maids, all that were in the house,
Together young and old ; and unto them
With sobs of sorrow spake Penelope :

‘ Hear, friends ; for unto me the Olympian
Hath given dole above all other women
Born and bred with me. For long since I lost
My noble husband of the lion heart,
Supreme in every worth amid the Danai,

Yea, my good lord, whose fame hath gone abroad
Through Hellas and mid Argos. And lo, now
The storms have carried off my well-loved son
Away from home and out of any tidings,
Nor did I ever hear that he was gone !
Hard-hearted women ! that ye never thought,
Not one of you, to rouse me from my bed
When off he went on his black, hollow ship,
Though well ye wotted of it ! For if I
Had heard that he was thinking of this journey,
He should have tarried here, for all his wish
To go—or left me dead within these halls.
But quick, go some one, call old Dolius,
My servant, whom my father gave me ere
I left my home—who keeps my orchard garden—
That he may go at once and sit beside
Laertes, and may tell him all these things.
So haply may Laertes weave some plan,
And go forth and complain unto the people
Of those who purpose to destroy his own
And his divine son's race.'

Then Eurycleia, her good nurse, replied :
'My lady, slay me with the ruthless sword
If so thou wilt—or let me live on here !
Yet will I not conceal my story from thee.
I knew all this. Whate'er he bade, I gave him,
Bread and sweet wine. He took a mighty oath
Of me to tell thee not, until at least
The twelfth day came or thou thyself didst miss him
And heardst that he was gone, that thou shouldst not
Mar thy fair face with tears. But now go bathe,
And take to thee clean robes, and with thy maids
Ascend unto thine upper room, and pray
Athenes, maid of ægis-bearing Zeus ;
For so may she preserve him even from death.

But trouble not an old man who is troubled.
Arceisius' son's race is not, I ween,
So wholly hateful to the blessed gods,
But yet there shall somehow survive thereof
Some one, who shall possess these vaulted halis
And the fat lands afield.'

She spake and lulled to rest the queen's laments
And stayed her eyes from weeping. She then bathed
And took to her clean robes, and with her maids
Climbed to her room, and, placing in a basket
Some meal for sprinkling, to Athene prayed :

'Hear me, thou maid of ægis-bearing Zeus,
Unwearied one ! if ever wise Odysseus
Burned in his home to thee rich thigh-pieces
Of sheep or kine, think now thereon, I pray,
And save my dear son, and ward off from him
The suitors in their evil insolence.'

Therewith she cried in worship to the goddess,
Who heard her prayer. But through the shadowy halls
The suitors burst out in a roar, and thus
Some haughty youth would say :

'Why, at long last this much sought-after queen
Prepares the marriage for us, knowing not
How death hath been made ready for her son !'

So one of them would say, but nought they knew
How these things were to be ; and in their midst
Antinous made a speech and said to them :

'Good sirs, avoid ye all alike big words,
Lest haply some one tell it even indoors.
Come, let us rise up silently, like this,
And carry out the counsel that we spake of,
For all of us agreed that it was good.'

With that he picked out the best twenty men,
And on their way to the swift ship and shore
They went. And first of all they pulled the ship

Down to deep water ; then they set the sail
And mast in the black ship, and fixed the oars
In leathern loops, all orderly, and raised
The white sails ; and bold servants brought their arms.
Well out they moored her in the roâd, and then
They came ashore themselves and took their supper,
And waited for the evening to come on.

But in her upper chamber there she lay
Fasting, the wise Penelope, without
A taste of food or drink, still wondering whether
Her gallant son would 'scape from death, or fall
Before the haughty suitors. As a lion
Broods in alarm among the throng of hunters
When they contract the ring of snares around him,
So brooded she till slumber sweet came o'er her,
And she sank sleeping, and her joints relaxed.

And now Athene, keen-eyed goddess, took
New counsel ; and she made a phantom shape
In semblance of a woman, Iphthime,
The daughter of great-souled Icarius,
Wife to Eumêlus, who in Pheræ dwelt.
This to divine Odysseus' house she sent,
Unto Penelope, as she wept and wailed,
To bid her cease from tears and lamentation.
And by the strap that worked the door-bolt passed
The shape into her room, and stood above
Her head and spoke to her :

'Sleepest, Penelope, sore-stricken heart ?
Nay, but the gods who live at ease forbid
That thou shouldst weep or grieve, because thy son
Shall yet return ; for in no case is he
A sinner in their sight.'

Then wise Penelope made answer, drowsing
Exceeding sweetly by the gates of dreams :
'Why, sister, hast thou come to me ? Thou wert

Not wont to come aforetime, for thou livest
A long way off. And dost thou bid me cease
From sorrow and the host of pains that trouble
My heart and soul? Long, long ago I lost
My noble husband of the lion heart,
Supreme in every worth amid the Danai,
Yea, my good lord, whose fame hath gone abroad
Through Hellas and mid-Argos. Now again
Is my loved son gone on his hollow ship,
Poor child, without experience of toils
Or gatherings of men ! For him I sorrow
Yet more than for my lord, and fear and tremble
Lest some ill thing befall him, or on land
'Mid those to whom he is gone, or on the sea ;
For many foes are making plots against him,
Intent to slay him ere he reach his home.'

Then the dim phantom answered her and said :
' Lift up thy heart, and be not in thy mind
Too sore afraid. For such a guide goes with him
As men have often prayed to have beside them,
For with her, Pallas Athene, is the power.
She pitieth thy sorrow : she it was
Who sent me forth to speak these words to thee.'

Then wise Penelope said again to her :
' If thou a god art truly and hast listened
To a god's voice, come then, I pray thee, tell me
Moreover of that hapless man, if yet
Perchance he is alive and sees the sunlight
Or is already dead, in Hades' house.'

But the dim phantom answered her and said :
' Nay, but of him I may not tell distinctly
If he be live or dead, and ill it is
To speak words light as wind.'

So saying by the bolt-hole of the door
The phantom slid away into a breath

Of wind. Icarius' daughter started up
From slumber, and her heart was warmed ; so clear
A dream had come to her by dead of night.

Meantime the suitors took to ship, and o'er
The water-ways were sailing, in their hearts
Plotting stark murder for Telemachus.
In midmost sea there lies a rocky isle
Half-way from Ithaca to rugged Samos,
Called Asteris, not large ; and therein is
A harbour with two mouths, where ships can ride.
There the Achæans lay in wait for him.

BOOK V

Now from her couch beside superb Tithonus
Uprose the Dawn, to carry light to gods
And men. The gods began to take their seats,
And Zeus, who thunders in the height among them,
Mightiest of all. To them Athene told
The story of Odysseus' many woes,
From memory ; for it lay upon her mind,
How in the dwelling of the nymph he waited :

‘ O Father Zeus, and all ye blessed gods
Who live for ever, let no sceptred king
Henceforth be kind and meek with all his heart,
Nor in his mind heed goodness, but let him
Always be harsh and do unrighteously !
Since no one of the people whom he ruled—
Ay, and was gentle as a father to them—
Remembereth divine Odysseus now.
But in an isle lies that sore-troubled man,
Held captive in the nymph Calypso's house.
He may not come unto his native land,
For neither hath he ships with oars nor crew,
To bear him o'er the broad backs of the sea.
And more, men mean to slay his well-loved son
Upon his homeward way ; for he went forth
To holy Pylos and fair Lacedæmon
To seek for tidings of his father.’

Then Zeus, who rolls the clouds, replied to her :
‘ My child, what word is this that hath escaped
The barrier of thy teeth ? Didst thou thyself
Not make this plan, how that Odysseus should
Come back and take his vengeance on these men ?

As for Telemachus, be thou his guide
Out of thy wisdom, as thou canst, so that
He reach his own land safely, and the suitors
Sail home again with all their toil in vain.'

With that to Hermes, his dear son he spake :
' Hermes, in all things else my messenger,
Now bear our firm will to yon fair-haired nymph.
Patient Odysseus must return ; return
He shall, with guidance nor of gods nor men :
But on the twentieth day, with many pains,
Borne on a tight-bound raft shall he arrive
In fertile Scheria, the Phæacians' land,
Those kinsmen of the gods ; and as a god
Shall they revere him heartily and send him
Aboard a ship to his dear native land,
Giving him bronze and gold and robes enough,
Good store, and more than ever he had won
From Troy, though from it he had come unhurt
With his due share of spoil. For in such wise
It is his fate to see his friends, and reach
His high-roofed house and his own native land.'

So spake he, and his courier, the slayer
Of Argus, was not slack. Beneath his feet
Anon he bound his sandals of fair gold,
Immortal, that were wont to bear him o'er
Wet seas or boundless land as swift as wind :
Also his wand he took, wherewith he lulls
The eyes of whom he will, and wakens others
From sleep again. With that same wand in hand
Strong Argus-slayer flew, and, crossing o'er
Pieria, shot from air into the deep,
And skimmed the surface like a cormorant
Who wets his thick-set plumage in the brine,
A-hunting fish along the fearful troughs
Of the unresting sea : in such a sort

Rode Hermes on the multitudinous waves.

Now when he reached the isle that lay afar,
Forth from the violet sea he came to land,
And made his way to a great cave, where dwelt
The fair-haired nymph: and her he found within.
And on the hearth a great fire blazed; the fragrance
Of burning cedar-logs and sandalwood
Went o'er the isle afar. And she within
Was singing with sweet voice, as by her loom
She came and went, and wove with golden shuttle.
Around the cave there grew a lusty wood,
Alder and poplar and sweet-smelling cypress,
Wherein far-winged birds were wont to nest—
Falcons and owls and chattering-tongued sea-crows
That have their business on the sea; and there
About the cavern trailed a garden vine
Robust and cluster-laden, and four fountains
All in a row were running with bright water,
Hard each by each, but facing different ways.
Around, soft meadows bloomed with violets
And parsley. E'en a god who chanced to come
Might gaze and marvel and delight his heart.

There Argus-slayer stood at gaze, and when he
Had marvelled in his heart at all these things,
Anon he entered the broad cave; nor did
Calypso the fair goddess fail to know him
As face to face they met, for not unknown
Are the eternal gods to one another,
Remote though some of them may dwell. But him,
Great-heart Odysseus, he found not within,
For he was seated weeping by the shore,
E'en as his wont had been, racking his soul
With tears and moans and griefs, and as he wept
Wistful he gazed o'er the unresting sea.

And, setting Hermes in a glittering chair,

Calypso the bright goddess questioned him :
' Say, wherefore, Hermes of the golden wand,
Art thou come here, a dear and honoured guest ?
Of old thou wert not wont to visit me.
Tell me thy thought : my wish is to fulfil it,
If so I can and it hath e'er been done.'

Therewith the goddess set a table by him,
Spread with ambrosia, and red nectar mixed.
And so the herald Hermes ate and drank ;
But having supped and stayed his soul with food,
Then he made answer to her, saying thus :

' Thou, that art goddess, askest me, a god,
About mine errand. I will tell thee truth,
At thy command. 'Twas Zeus who bade me come
Hither against my will ; of his own will
Who would wing over such a fearsome space
Of salt sea-water, void of towns of men
Who offer victims and choice hecatombs
To heaven ? But nowise is it possible
For any other god to shun or thwart
The will of ægis-bearing Zeus. He saith
That here with thee there is a man, afflicted
Above all others who round Priam's city
Fought for nine years and sacked it in the tenth,
And set out home. But on their way they sinned
Against Athene, and she raised upon them
An ill wind and long waves ; then all the rest
Of his brave company were lost. But him
The wind and wave bore onward and brought hither.
Him now Zeus bids thee send with all speed hence :
For it is not his doom to die here, far
From friends ; he still shall look on them again
And reach his high-roofed house and native land.'

So said he, and Calypso the fair goddess
Shuddered, and spake to him with wingéd words :

· Hard are ye, O ye gods, and envious
Exceedingly, who grudge that goddesses
Should honourably mate with men, if any
Takes mortal man to be her bedfellow !
E'en so when rosy-fingered Dawn took to her
Orion, then ye gods who live at ease
Were envious of it, till pure Artemis,
The golden-throned, came with her gentle arrows
On him and slew him in Ortygia :
So when Demeter the fair haired gave way
To love and lay beside Iasion
In the thrice-furrowed fallow, not for long
Did Zeus lack news of it, and him he slew
With a cast of his white flame. So now, ye gods,
You grudge a mortal man to bide with me !
I saved his life, when on a keel he rode
Alone, for Zeus with his white bolt had smitten
And cleft his swift ship 'mid the wine-dark sea ;
There perished all the rest of his brave band,
But him the wind and wave bore and brought hither.
I loved him and I nursed him, and I said
That I would make him deathless and unageing
For all his days, But, since it cannot be
That any other god should shun or thwart
The ægis-bearer's purpose, let him go—
If 'tis from Zeus this call and summons come—
O'er the unresting sea ; but it is not
For me to send him ! Neither have I ships
With oars, nor crews at hand, to further him
Upon his way across the broad sea-backs.
But I with all my heart will put it to him,
Concealing nothing, so that safe and sound
He may return unto his native land.'

Thereon the herald Hermes answered her :
Ay, send him forth e'en now, and have respect

Unto the wrath of Zeus, lest haply he
Hereafter lay on thee an angry hand.'

With that, strong Argus-slayer sped away.
But having heard the message sent by Zeus,
To brave Odysseus went the queenly nymph.
She found him sitting on the shore ; his eyes
Were never dry of tears, and his sweet life
Was ebbing out in grief for his return.
No more the nymph found favour with him now :
O' nights indeed, having therein no choice,
He slept beside her in the hollow caves,
Unwilling lover by a lady willing ;
But all the day on rocks or sands he sate,
Racking his soul with tears and sighs and griefs,
And gazed through tears o'er the unresting sea.
So the bright goddess stood by him, and said :

' No more, I bid thee, mourn, unhappy man,
Nor ebb thy life out here ; for even now
I will with all my heart despatch thee hence.
Come, take an axe and hew long beams, and make
A good broad raft and fix deck-planks on it
High-raised, to bear thee o'er the misty deep.
Bread, water, and red wine to please thy heart
And keep off hunger will I place therein,
And find thee clothes, and send a following wind,
For thee to come unhurt to thine own place,
If such be the good pleasure of the gods
Who hold wide heaven ; for they are mightier
Than I, alike to purpose and perform.'

So said she, but the sore-tried goodly man
Shuddered, and spake to her with wingéd words :
' Nay, goddess, 'tis some other scheme thou hast,
And not my sending, that thou biddest me
Cross on a raft this great gulf of the sea,
So dread and grievous, over which not even

The swift, slim^{*} ships, rejoicing in the breeze
Of Zeus, may pass. Nor would I board a raft,
Goddess, against thy will, unless thou dare
Swear a great oath to plan me no new harm.'

At that, Calypso the fair goddess smiled,
And stroked him with her hand, and spake to him :
'Thou art indeed a rogue, nor weak of wit,
'That thou couldst think of uttering such a speech !
Be witness Earth and spacious Heaven above
And von down-dropping water of the Styx—
Which is the greatest and most frightful oath
For blessed gods—of this : that I will plan
No fresh misfortune for thee. Nay, I have
Such thoughts in mind and I will give such counsel
As for myself, were like need come on me.
I too am righteous-minded, and I have
A heart of pity in me, not of iron.'

So saying, the bright goddess led the way
Apace, and in her steps he walked behind :
And man and goddess came to the deep cave
Then down he sate upon the chair from which
Hermes had risen, and the nymph set by him
Food of all kinds, such as is meat for men,
To eat and drink ; and she sate opposite
Divine Odysseus, and her handmaids put
Before her nectar and ambrosia ; so [them ;
They stretched their hands to the good things before
And when they had had their fill of meat and drink,
Calypso, the bright goddess, spake the first :

'Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, art thou then so keen
To get thee home and to thy native land
This very hour ? Well, e'en so, fare thee well !
Yet if thou knewest in thy heart the tale
Of woes that thou art fated to fulfil,

Ere thou win home, then wouldst thou bid^e with me
And keep this house and never taste of death,
For all thy wish to see thy wife, for whom
Thou longest daily. Not that I avow^r
Myself in shape and stature worse^r than her !
For nowise is it meet that mortal dames
Should vie in form and grace with the immortals.'

And deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' Be not, great goddess, wroth with me for this.
The wise Penelope to look upon
Is poorer—well I know it of myself—
In comeliness and majesty than thou ;
For she is mortal, while nor death nor age
Can come on thee. But, for all that, each day
I long and pray to reach my home and see
The day of my return. And if again
Some god shall wreck me on the wine-dark sea,
I will abide it, for my heart within
Is patient and ere now by wave and war
Much have I suffered and have laboured much.
Let this thing too be added unto those.'

Therewith the sun sank and the dark came on.
And they two entered the deep cave's recess,
And took their love, abiding each by each.

But when the early, rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, Odysseus put on cloak and tunic ;
And the nymph clad her in a long, white robe,
Fine-wove and gracious, and about her waist
She cast a bright gold zone, and on her head
A drooping veil. Then she began to plan
The sending of Odysseus great of heart.
She gave him a big axe of bronze, two-edged,
Well fitted to his grip, with a good helve
Of olive wood, fixed firm ; and therewithal
A polished adze. And then she led the way

Up to the island edge where trees grew tall,
Alder and poplar and sky-reaching pine,
Long-dried and sere, buoyant to float for him ;
And having shown him where the tall trees grew
Calypso the fair goddess went back home.
But he fell cutting timber and his work
Went fast : a score in all he cut, and then
He lopped them with the axe and cunningly
He made them smooth, and straight unto the line.
Meanwhile Calypso the fair goddess brought
Him augers, and he bored each beam and joined
One to another, and then made all fast
With pegs and mortices. And as a ship-wright
Who know his craft rounds out the curving hull
Of some broad freighter, even wide as that
Odysseus made his raft. He worked away,
Setting the decks up firm on close-set ribs,
And finished them with long side-planks. Therein
He set a mast and matched to it a yard,
And further made a helm wherewith to steer,
And then from end to end he fenced the whole
With willow wattle to keep out the waves,
And faced it with thick undergrowth. Meanwhile
Calypso the fair goddess brought him cloth
To fashion sails : those too he made with skill ;
And fastened braces, hauling-ropes and sheets
Upon the raft ; and finally he heaved it
On rollers down into the bright salt sea.

The fourth day came, and all his work was done.
And on the fifth day fair Calypso sent him
Forth from the island on his way, when she
Had washed and clad him in sweet-scented robes.
Upon the raft the goddess put a skin
Of dark wine, and a larger skin of water,
With victuals in a wallet, wherein she

Put many dainties to his heart's content ;
And sent a warm and gentle breeze to blow.
Glad then at heart the good Odysseus spread
Sail to the breeze, the while he sate and steered
With an oar cunningly, and sleep fell not
Upon his eyelids as he watched the Pleiads
And the slow setting of Boötes, and
The Bear, which otherwise they call the Wain,
Which ever wheels on the same spot and keeps
Its watch upon Orion, and alone
Of stars is never dipped in Ocean's baths :
For that same star Calypso the fair goddess
Bade him keep always on his left as he
Sailed o'er the sea. Now for ten days and seven
He sailed the sea, and on the eighteenth day
Appeared the shadowy mountains of the land
Of the Phæacians, where 'twas nearest him ;
And like a shield it showed in the dim deep.

But the great lord of earthquake on his way
Home from the Ethiopians beheld him,
From the far mountains of the Solymi,
Conspicuous as o'er the deep he sailed.
And he waxed mighty angry in his spirit
And shook his head and communed with his heart :

' Perdition ! why, the gods have changed their mind
About Odysseus, while I was away
Among the Ethiopians ! Here ~~he~~ is
Hard by the land of the Phæacians, where
He is predestined to escape the last
Extremity of his besetting pains.
Ay, ay ! But even so I think I shall
Pursue him to satiety of trouble.'

With that, he rounded up the clouds and seized
The trident in his hand and churned the deep,
And roused all blasts that blow, and hid with clouds

Both land and sea ; and night tore down from heaven.
Then East and South winds and the fierce West wind
Clashed, and the Norther born of the bright sky
Rolling a mighty wave. Odysseus' knees
Thereat were loosened and his courage failed,
And heavily he spake to his great heart :

‘O wretched me ! What will befall me now
At last ? I fear the goddess spake too true.
She said that on the deep, ere I won home,
I should fill full the measure of my woes ;
And all these things are now being brought to pass.
Lo, how hath Zeus crowned the wide heaven with clouds
And churned the deep, while blasts of all the winds
Rush at me ! Now to certain doom I plunge.
Thrice blest and four times were those Danaï
Who fell of old in the wide land of Troy,
Doing the pleasure of the Atridæ ! Would
I too had died and met my fate that day
When many Trojans flung their bronze-tipped spears
Upon me, fighting o’er Pelides dead.
Then had I had due burial, and the Greeks
Had borne my fame abroad ; but now am I
Doomed to be taken by a wretched death.’

E’en as he spoke, a great wave crashing down,
Smote him with fearful force, and spun the raft
About. Far from the raft he fell and lost
The rudder from his hand ; and a wild charge
Of jostling winds snapped off the mast half-way,
And sails and yard shot far off in the deep.
Long time it held him under, nor could he
Rise quickly from the rush of the great wave,
For heavily the raiment weighed him down
Which fair Calypso gave him ; but at last
Come up he did, and from his mouth spat forth
The bitter brine which streamed down from his head.

Yet even so, for all his plight, he thought
Upon the raft, and chased it through the waves
And clutched it, and sate down upon its waist,
Seeking escape from death ; and the great wave
Drove it this way and that along its path.
And as the North wind in the harvest time
Blows thistle-down across the plain, and close
The tufts cling each to each, so the winds bore
The raft this way and that way o'er the sea ;
Now would the South wind toss it to the North
To bear along, and now again the East
Would hand it over for the West to hunt.

But Cadmus' daughter, Ino, fair of foot,
(Even Leucothea, who on a time
Was maid of mortal speech, but now hath won
In the sea-deeps due honour from the gods)
Beheld Odysseus ; and she pitied him
Drifting in sore distress, and from the mere
She rose up, like a sea-gull on the wing,
And sate upon the tight-bound raft and spake :

' O thou poor man ! why is the earthquake lord,
Poseidon, wroth with thee so frightfully
That he is sowing all these evils for thee ?
But yet for all his rage he shall not quite
Destroy thee. But do as I say ; I think
Thou art a man of sense ; off with these clothes :
And leave thy raft to drive before the winds,
And swim, and make for the Phæacians' land,
Where thou art destined to escape. Here now,
Take thou this veil and wind it round thy breast ;
It is immortal, so there is no fear
That thou shalt suffer aught or perish ; but
Soon as thy fingers feel their grip on land
Then loose and cast it in the wine-dark sea,
Far from the land, and turn and go thy way.'

So, giving him the veil, the goddess dived
Back like a sea-gull in the surging deep,
And the dark wave enclosed her. But the brave
Sore-tried Odysseus was perplexed in mind,
And heavily he spake to his great heart :

‘ O woe is me ! can one of the immortals
Be weaving some new snare for me, that she
Says “ Leave the raft ” ? Nay, I will not obey,
Not yet ; a long way off mine eyes beheld
That land where, so she said, I might be saved.
‘ This will I do ; it seems to me the best.
So long as to their joints the timbers hold
I will abide here and endure my troubles,
But when the waves have smashed the raft to pieces
Then will I swim : I see no better plan.’

While thus he pondered in his heart and mind,
Poseidon, lord of earthquake, raised a wave
Great, terrible and grievous, arching over,
And drave it at him. And as ramping wind
Tosses a heap of dry chaff, scattering it
This way and that way, so the billow strewed
The long beams of the raft ; but on one beam
Odysseus rode as he bestrode a horse.
He shed the clothes that fair Calypso gave him,
And straightway wound the veil about his breast
And headlong dived with hands outstretched, in act
To swim. And the great lord of earthquake saw,
And shook his head and communed with his soul :

‘ Well, now thou art in trouble ! wander on
Across the deep, till thou art come among
A people whom Zeus fosters ; even so,
I think thou wilt not hold affliction cheap.’

With that he lashed his steeds of flowing mane
And came to Ægæe where his proud home is.

But Pallas, maid of Zeus, had a new plan.

She blocked the paths of all the other winds
And called on them to cease and couch themselves,
But roused the North to speed, and brake the waves
Before him, that Odysseus, seed of Zeus,
Might win his way from death and doom, and come
To the Phæacians, lovers of the oar.

So on he drifted for two nights and days
O'er the high swell, and oft his heart forbode
The end ; but when the fair-haired Dawn fulfilled
The third day, then the tempest dropped, and fell
A windless calm ; and, poised on a big wave
With quick look-out he saw the land near by.
Glad as to sons' eyes is a glimpse of life
Returning to their father, when he lies
In pains and sickness, wasting slow to death,
Assailed by some ill demon, and the gods
To their delight deliver him from evil ;
So welcome to Odysseus seemed the land
And wood, and on he swam in eagerness
To light thereon. But when he was far off
As a man's shout can carry and could hear
The thunder of the sea upon the reefs
(For the great billows crashed in fearful surge
On the dry land, and nought was seen but spray,
Nor roads nor havens where a ship might ride,
But only jutting crags and reefs and cliffs),
Then were Odysseus' knees and courage loosed,
And heavily he spake to his great heart :

' Ah me ! when Zeus has given me sight of land
At last beyond all hope, and I have cleft
My way through this abyss, I cannot find
A place for landing from the hoary sea !
Outside are sharp crags, and about them roars
The foaming surge and the smooth rock is sheer ;
And deep inshore the water, that nowise

Firm footing can I find and 'scape from harm.
For if I seek to land, a mighty wave
May dash me on the ragged rock : it were
No use to try it ! But if I swim on
Further along the coast in hope of finding
Some haven of the sea or slanting spit,
I fear the storm may snatch me up again
And bear me groaning o'er the fishy deep ;
Or else some god may rouse a great sea-beast
Out of the brine against me—many such
Great Amphitrite pastures—for I know
How wroth with me is the great earthquake lord.'

Thus as he pondered in his mind and heart
A great wave bore him to the jagged shore.
There had his bones been smashed and he been flayed,
But that Athene, keen-eyed goddess, gave him
A thought, and in he dashed, and clutched the rock
With both his hands, and clung there with a cry,
Till the great wave went by. So he escaped
That wave, but then with its returning wash
It leapt on him and smote and flung him far
To sea. Just as a cuttle-fish is dragged
Out from its lair and to its suckers stick
The pebbles thickly, so from his strong hands
The bits of skin were stripped against the rocks ;
And a great wave engulfed him. Then indeed
Had poor Odysseus perished beyond measure,
But that keen-eyed Athene gave him judgment.
Out from the breakers belching toward the land
He slipped, and swam outside, watching the shore
In hope to find some shelving spit or haven.
But when his swimming brought him to the mouth
Of a fair-flowing river, where the place
Seemed best to him, because there were no rocks
And also it was sheltered from the wind,

He recognized the river flowing forth
For god, and in his heart made prayer to him :

‘Hear, Lord, whoe’er thou art ! To thee, as one
Much sought with prayer, I come, out from the sea
To ’scape Poseidon’s threats : and reverend
E’en to the deathless gods is he who comes
A wanderer, e’en as I with travail come
Unto thy stream, and knees. Have pity, Lord,
For I profess myself thy suppliant.’

So said he, and the river ceased his flow
And stayed his wave, and made a calm before him,
And brought him safe into his estuary.
He bowed his knees ; he let his strong hands fall ;
Because his heart was beaten by the sea.
And all his flesh was swollen, and sea-water
Ran in great streams up through his nose and mouth ;
And without speech or breath or strength he lay,
For fearful weariness had come on him.
But when his breath returned and in him life
Revived, he loosed from him the goddess’ veil
And dropped it in the seaward-flowing river ;
And the strong current bore it back down-stream,
And Ino caught it straightway in her hands.
But from the stream he turned, and in the reeds
Sank down, and kissed the earth that giveth grain
And heavily he spake to his great heart :

‘O, woe is me ! how shall I fare ? what will
Befall me at the last ? If I keep watch
Here in the river all the weary night,
The bitter frost and the fresh dew together
May end me, as from feebleness I breathe
My life away ; for in the early morn
Cold blows the river breeze ; but if I climb
The bank up to the shady wood and rest
’Mid the thick bushes (if so be fatigue

And cold might leave me, and sweet sleep come on)
I may be prey and spoil of savage beasts.'

Then, as he thought, this seemed the better way.
Into the wood he went, and found it near
The water in an open place. He crept
Beneath two bushes growing close together,
One olive and one thorn ; through these the strength
Of the wet winds ne'er blew, nor the bright sun
Beat with his rays, nor shower of rain could pierce,
So close they grew, entwining each with each
Thereunder crept Odysseus, and at once
Collected with both hands a good, wide bed,
For there was plenteous store of fallen leaves,
Enough to warm two men or even three
In winter-time, however sharp the weather.
And seeing it the sore-tried, goodly man
Was glad, and lay down in the midst and heaped
The dead leaves over him. And as a man
Who hath no neighbours, on an outlying farm,
Conceals a brand in the black ash, and thus
Preserves a seed of fire, so that he need
Not seek elsewhere to kindle it, e'en so
Odysseus wrapped him in the leaves ; and o'er
His eyes Athene showered sleep, to fold
His lids, and loose him swift from toil and pain

BOOK VI

There then he slept, the sore-tried goodly man,
Odysseus, spent with drowsiness and toil.
Meanwhile to the Phæacians' land and town
Athenē went : in Hypereia wide
They dwelt aforetime, near the Cyclops tribe,
Men of o'erweening pride, who looted them
Continually and were mightier than they :
Thence the godlike Nausithous led them forth
And stablished them in Scheria, afar
From men who live by bread ; and drew a wall
About the town and builded homes and made
Shrines for the gods and portioned out the fields.
But he ere now had felt the hand of fate
And passed to Hades : and Alcinous reigned
With wisdom from the gods. 'Twas to his house
Athenē, keen-eyed goddess, went, to find
The means to bring great-heart Odysseus home.
To a rich room she went, wherein there slept
A girl, in form and beauty like the gods,
Great-souled Alcinous' child, Nausicaa.
Close by, beside each pillar of the door,
Two hand-maids slept, having the Graces' gift
Of beauty : and the shining doors were shut.

But like a breath of air the goddess swept
To the girl's bed, and stood above her head
And spake to her, taking upon herself
The likeness of a maid of the same age
As was Nausicaa, and a friend of hers,
The daughter of a famous sailor, Dymas.
In her shape then keen-eyed Athenē spake :

‘Why, what a careless child thy mother bore !
Thy shining robes are lying all unheeded,
Nausicaa ! Yet thy marriage is at hand,
When thou thyself must be well dressed, and dress
Those who go with thee well—the very things
See thou, that get a good report ’mid men,
To cheer a father and an honoured mother.
Nay, come, let’s go a-washing at the dawn
Of day, and I will go with thee to help,
That thou mayst get thee ready with all speed,
For not much longer shalt thou bide a maiden.
Already they come wooing thee, the best
Of the Phæacian folk, whence too art thou.
Come then, bestir thy noble father early
At dawn to furnish thee with mules and cart,
To take the clothes and shining coverlets
And girdles. Ay, far seemlier for thee too
To go thus than afoot ; because the tanks
For washing are a great way from the town.’

So with these words keen-eyed Athene sped
Back to Olympus, where, they say, is set
The seat of the gods, that standeth fast for ever,
By winds unshaken, and unwet by rains ;
On it no snow falls, but clear cloudless air
O’erhangs it, and white radiance floats o’er it.
And therein are they glad, the blessed gods,
For all their days. Thither Athene went
When she had spoke her message to the maid.

At once came Dawn of the bright throne, and woke
The fair-robed maid Nausicaa. Now she
Was lost in wonder at her dream and went
From room to room to tell it to her mother
And father dear. She found them both indoors :
Beside the hearth amid her handmaids sate
Her mother spinning yarn of deep sea-blue ;

Her sire she met as he was going forth
To meet the high kings in the council-room
Where the Phæacian chiefs had bidden him.
So coming close she said to her dear father :

‘ Couldst thou not, Daddy, order me a cart,
A high one, with strong wheels, that I may take
My nice clothes which are lying dirty by
To wash them in the river? And besides
’Tis right that going to council with the kings
Thou shouldst be clad in spotless robes thyself :
And thou hast five sons living in thy halls—
Two married, and three lusty bachelors—
And they are always wanting new-washed clothes
For dances : I must think of all these things.’

So said she ; for she was ashamed to speak
Of happy marriage to her father ; but
He fully understood, and answered her :

‘ Nor mules I grudge thee, child, nor aught beside ;
Go, and the slaves shall have thy waggon ready,
High and strong-wheeled, and fitted with a hood.’

Then to the slaves he called, and they obeyed ;
Outside, they made the light mule-waggon ready,
And led the mules close up, and yoked them to it :
Meantime the maiden brought out from her room
The shining robes, and on the polished cart
She laid them. And her mother filled a basket
With food of all sorts to the heart’s content,
And dainties too : and in a goat-skin bottle
She poured some wine. Then the maid stepped up on
The cart ; and in a flask of gold her mother
Gave her soft olive oil, that having bathed
She and her maids might rub themselves therewith.
Then the girl took the whip and shining reins
And flicked the mules to start : there was a clatter,
And on they sped unflagging with their load,

The raiment and the princess—not alone,
For with her also her attendants went.

Now when they came to the bright running river,
Where there were troughs unfailing, into which
The strong clear water welled and then poured over,
Enough to wash the dirtiest garments clean,
The girls unharnessed from the cart the mules
And shooed them off beside the eddying river
To browse on honeyed clover. In their arms
They took the raiment from the cart and bore it
To the dark pool and briskly trod it down
Inside the cisterns, racing one another.
Now having washed and cleansed the robes of stain
They spread them out in rows upon the shore,
Where most the breakers washed the pebbles clean.
Then the girls bathed and rubbed them well with oil,
And took their meal upon the river banks,
And waited for the clothes to dry in the sun.
Then when the princess and her maids had had
Their joy of food, they cast their veils away
And fell to playing ball, and to her mates
White-armed Nausicaa began the song.
And like as Artemis, the archer-queen,
Moves o'er the hills along the lofty spurs
Of Erymanthus or Taygetus,
Loving to hunt the boars or the swift deer,
And with her romp the wild nymphs of the wood
Whom ægis-bearing Zeus begat; and glad
Is Leto in her heart, as Artemis
High above all uplifts her head and brows
And easily is known, though all are fair—
So 'mid her maidens shone the maid unwed.

But as she was about to yoke the mules
And fold the goodly clothes up, to go home,
Keen-eyed Athene made another plan

How that Odysseus should awake and see
The lovely maid, and she should be his guide
Unto the town of the Phæacian folk.
So then the princess tossed the ball to one
Of her maids, but missed the maid; and threw the ball
In a deep eddy, and they cried aloud ;
And at the cry goodly Odysseus woke
And sate up, pondering in his mind and heart :

‘ Alack, to what men’s land am I come now ?
And are they cruel, savage and unjust,
Or good to strangers, with god-fearing mind ?
How in mine ears there rang some maidens’ cry,
Of nymphs who haunt the steep brows of the hills
And river springs and grassy water-meads !
Can there be somewhere men of human speech
At hand ? Well, I myself will try, and see.’

So saying from the under-growth he crept,
Goodly Odysseus, and with strong hand brake
A leafy bough from the thick wood, to hold
Athwart his loins and hide his nakedness.
Then out he sallied, like a mountain lion
Trusting his strength, who fares forth, beaten on
By rain and wind, but in his eyes a fire :
Amid the kine he goes or ’mid the sheep
Or on the trail of the wild deer ; his belly
Bids him go even to the close-kept farm
To raid the flocks. So was Odysseus fain
To join the company of fair-haired maids,
Stark as he was ; such need was come on him.
And grim he looked to them, befouled with brine ;
And this and that way on the jutting spits
They fluttered ; only one, Alcinous’ child,
Stood firm, because Athene in her heart
Put courage and took panic from her limbs.
She stayed and faced him. But Odysseus pondered

Whether to clasp the lovely maiden's knees
And make his prayer, or standing there apart
Entreat her with soft words, in hopes she might
Show him the town and give him clothes : and as
He thought thereon, it seemed the better way
To pray her from a distance with soft words,
Lest if he touched her knees she might be wroth ;
So spake he straight a soft and cunning word :

‘ Queen, I entreat thee : art thou of the gods
Or mortal ? if indeed thou art of those
Who hold wide heaven, then to Artemis
Child of great Zeus, nearest I liken thee
For comeliness and dignity and breed ;
But if thou art of men who live on earth,
Thrice-blesséd are thy sire and lady mother,
Thrice-blesséd are thy brothers : well I wot,
Their heart is ever warm with joy of thee,
Oft as they see thee entering the dance,
So fair a flower. But over all men blest
In heart is he, who shall prevail with gifts
Of wooing and shall lead thee to his home.
Ne’er have mine eyes beheld one like to thee
Of mortal kind, nor man or woman ; awe
Comes on me as I look : yet of a truth
In Delos once I saw a thing as fair,
A young palm springing by Apollo’s altar—
For thither too went I, and many people
With me, upon a road on which sore pains
Were waiting for me—so, when I saw that,
I marvelled long at heart, for never yet
Shot such a tree, so goodly, from the ground.
So, lady, likewise do I marvel at thee
And am amazed and greatly fear to touch
Thy knees ; but heavy grief is come on me.
Lo, yesterday, upon the twentieth day,

I 'scaped the wine-dark sea ; for all that time
The waves and swift winds drove me from the isle
Ogygia. Now some god has stranded me
Here, that here too I suffer some mischance ,
For 'tis not over yet, I wot ; ere that
The gods will still bring many a thing to pass.
Have pity, Queen ! for first to thee I come
After much grievous toil, and of the others
Who own this town and land, I know not one.
Show me the city ; give me a rag to cast
About me, if thou broughtest with thee here
Some wrapper for the linen ; and for thee,
May the gods grant thee all thy heart's desire,
Husband and home, and that excelling gift,
One-mindedness ; for there is nothing greater
Nor better, than when man and woman dwell
Of one mind in a house : their enemies
Are sick to see it, and their friends rejoice :
But best of all they know it for themselves.'

Then the white-armed Nausicaa answered him :
' Since, stranger, thou dost seem no wicked man
Nor fool, and 'tis Olympian Zeus himself
Gives luck to men, men good or bad, to each
Just as he will ; so certainly these troubles
Are given thee by him, and thou must bear them
As best may be ; but now, since thou art come
Here to our land and town, thou shalt not lack
For clothes or any help that is the due
Of sorry suppliants when they meet with friends.
The city I will show thee, and will name
The people's name. This city and this land
Belong to the Phæacians ; and I am
The daughter of great-souled Alcinous,
On whom depend his people's power and might.

She spake, and called unto her fair-haired maids ;

‘Stand still, my maids : where are ye running to
At sight of a man ? You surely do not think
He is a foe ? There is no living man
Nor ever shall be, that shall come with war
To the Phæacians’ land ; for very dear
We are to the immortals. Far apart
We dwell ’mid surging seas, the last of men,
With whom no other men have trafficking.
No, this is some poor wanderer hither strayed ;
Him we must tend now, for from Zeus are all
Strangers and beggars, and a little gift
Is welcome. Give this stranger meat and drink,
My serving-maids, and bathe him in the river
In some place that is sheltered from the wind.’

So said she, and the girls stood still and called
Each other, and they made Odysseus sit
In shelter, as Nausicaa had bidden,
The daughter of great-souled Alcinous ;
By him they laid a cloak and vest for garb
And gave him soft oil in the flask of gold,
And bade him wash him in the running water.

Then to the girls the great Odysseus said :
‘Maids, stand you there apart, while I myself
Wash off the salt crust from my shoulder-blades
And rub myself with olive oil : for, sooth,
’Tis a long time since oil came near my skin !
But in your sight I will not bathe ; ashamed
Am I to strip amid you fair-haired maids.’

So said he and they went apart and told
Their lady. But with water from the stream
Goodly Odysseus cleansed him of the brine
That clung to his broad shoulders and his back,
And from his head he wiped away the scurf
Of the unresting sea. Now when he had washed
From head to foot and had anointed him

With olive oil and put on him the robes
The young girl gave him, then Athene, child
Of Zeus, made him more tall and strong to see,
And loosed his locks like curly hyacinths :
And as a cunning smith, trained in all crafts
By Pallas or Hephæstus, over-plates
Gold upon silver, and his work hath grace,
So o'er Odysseus' head and shoulders now
The goddess shed a glow. Then by the shore
He went and sat apart, in a new flush
Of grace and charm ; and the maid marvelled at him,
And to her fair-haired comrades thus she said :

‘ Hark, white-armed maids ; I have a word to say.
Not counter to the will of all the gods
Who keep Olympus hath this stranger come
To us Phæacians, equal with the gods.
Erewhile indeed he seemed to me uncouth,
But now is like the gods who hold high heaven.
O might a man so brave be called my husband,
And dwell here, and it please him here to bide !
But give the stranger meat and drink, my girls.’

So said she, and they hearkened and obeyed
At once, and set beside Odysseus meat
And drink : whereon the sore-tried goodly man
Odysseus ate and drank right eagerly,
For long it was since he had tasted food.

Then fair Nausicaa had another thought :
She folded up the clothes and loaded them
On the good wain and yoked the strong-hoofed mules
And climbed the cart, and thus she hailed Odysseus :

‘ Up, sir, and on now to the town, that I
May guide thee to mine own wise father's house,
Wherein I promise thou shalt meet the best
Of all our folk. But do just as I say—
To me thou seemest sensible enough—

While we are passing fields and farms of men
Do thou walk quickly with my maids behind
The mules and cart ; and I will lead the way.
But when we reach the city—and around it
Runs a high wall, and either side of it
Is a good harbour, and the entrance way
Is strait, a road-way lined with curving ships,
For each has his own station for his ship,
Where too is their assembly-place around
Poseidon's noble precinct, set with stones
Huge and deep-laid—there people o'erhaul
The gear of their black ships, cables and sails,
And shape their oars—for the Phæacians care
Neither for bow nor quiver, but for masts
And oars of ships, and shapely ships wherewith
Their pride it is to cross the hoary sea—
'Tis their coarse talk I would avoid, and have
No man hereafter chide me, for indeed
Among the folk are some most insolent ;
And some rude fellow meeting us might say
“ Who's this tall stranger with Nausicaa ?
A proper man ! where did she pick him up ?
He'll be her husband, doubtless. It must be
She's taking charge of some stray shipwrecked man,
From far away, since near us no men dwell ;
Or else in answer to her fervent prayers
Some god has come right down from heaven, and she
Will have him all her days. Well, better so,
If after all she hath gone forth and found
A husband from abroad, for cheap enough
She holds all the Phæacians of this land
Who, good and many, come a-wooing her ! ”
So will they say, and I should feel disgraced.
Yea, and I too would blame another girl
Who did such things and while her parents lived,

Against their wish, was intimate with men
Before her day of open wedlock came.

‘ But, stranger, hearken closely to my words :
So mayst thou soonest at my father’s hands
Win escort and thy journey home again.
Hard by the road Athene’s noble grove
Of poplars shalt thou find, wherein a spring
Wells up, and all around is meadow land.
There is my father’s park and fruitful vineyard,
Far from the city as a man’s shout carries.
Sit there and tarry long enough for us
To reach the city and my father’s house ;
And when thou deemest we have reached the house,
Go then to the Phæacians’ town and seek
The house of great Alcinous, my father ;
Easy it is to find ; a tiny child
Could guide thee to it, for far otherwise
Are builded the Phæacians’ homes ; so fine
A palace hath the lord Alcinous.
But when the house and court enclose thee, pass
The great hall quickly till thou reach my mother,
Who sits beside the hearth in the fire-light
Weaving sea-purple varn, a sight to see,
Leaning against a pillar, and her maids
Behind her ; and beside her seat my father’s
Is leaned, whereon he sits and drinks his wine
Like an immortal. Him do thou pass by,
And cast thy hands about my mother’s knees,
That thou mayst see the day of thy return
Gladly and soon, though thou art come from far.
Ay, if thou findest favour in her heart,
There’s hope for thee to see thy friends again
And come to thy good house and native land.’

So saying with the shining whip she flicked
The mules, and straight they left the running water ;

And well they trotted with good rolling pace,
And heedfully she drove, that they might follow
Afoot, Odysseus and the maids, and used
The whip with judgment : and the sun went down
Just as they reached Athene's famous grove,
And there Odysseus sate him down and prayed
Unto the maiden daughter of great Zeus :

‘ O hear me, child of ægis-bearing Zeus,
Unwearied one ! indeed and hearken now,
Since once aforetime when I was sore-smitten
And the renowned earth-shaker battered me,
Thou didst not hear. Grant me to come to these
Phæacians and find friendliness and pity.’

So did he pray, and Pallas Athene heard
His prayer ; but yet she showed him not her face ;
For that she revered her father's brother,
Who was consumed with furious rage against
Godlike Odysseus, till he should win home.

BOOK VII

There then he prayed, the sore-tried goodly man,
Odysseus, while the two strong mules bore on
The maiden to the city. When she reached
Her father's famous palace, in the gate-way
She stopped them, and her brothers gathered round,
Men like immortals, and they set the mules
Free from the cart and bore the clothes indoors.
The girl went to her room. Her chamber-maid
The old Eurymedusa lit her fire ;
The curving ships had brought her from Apeire
Long since, and men had chosen her as prize
To give Alcinous, for that he was king
Of all Phæacians, and folk hearkened to him
As to a god : and in the court she tended
White-armed Nausicaa, and was wont to light
Her fire and get her supper in her room.

By now Odysseus roused himself to seek
The town : and o'er him with a kindly thought
Athene let a thick mist fall, that none
Of the proud-souled Phæacians meeting him
Might jeer at him, and ask him who he was.
But as he was in the act of entering
The pleasant town, the keen-eyed goddess met him,
Like a young maiden carrying a pitcher,
And stood before him ; and Odysseus asked her :
‘ Couldst thou, my child, not guide me to the palace
Of lord Alcinous, king among this people ?
Lo, I am come a stranger travel-worn
From a far land ; wherefore no man I know
Of them who own this city and these farms.’

Then the keen-eyed Athene answered him :
' Then truly, sir and stranger, will I show thee
The palace, as thou bidst me ; for it lies
Hard by the house of mine own noble father.
Only go thou in silence—I will lead—
And look upon no man, nor question any ;
For these folk do not gladly suffer strangers,
Nor welcome kindly comers from abroad ;
Their trust is in the speed of their swift ships
Wherein they cross the great gulf of the sea,
Which gift the lord of earthquake gave to them :
Swift are their ships as flighting bird or thought.'

With that, Athene quickly led the way
And in the goddess' steps he came behind ;
Nor as he passed among them through the city
Did the sea-famed Phæacians notice him,
Because fair-haired Athene, that dread goddess,
Suffered it not, but shed a wondrous mist
About him in her kindly thought for him.
And at the harbours and the gallant ships,
The heroes' meeting-places, the long walls
Lofty and crowned with stakes, a sight to see,
Odysseus marvelled. But when they were come
Nigh to the splendid palace of the king,
Keen-eyed Athene was the first to speak :

' Here, sir and stranger, is the palace which
Thou badst me show thee : thou wilt find therein
Princes at feast, the fosterlings of Zeus ;
But go thou in, and fear not in thy heart,
For in all works the bold man is the better,
Though he be come from a strange land. And first
Within the palace thou wilt find the queen :
Arete is her name, of the same stock
As King Alcinous. The earthquake lord
First got Nausithous, of Peribcea,

Fairest of women-kind, the youngest daughter
Of him who ruled the Giants in their pride,
Great-heart Eurymedon. Now he brought ruin
On his mad people and himself ; howbeit
Poseidon, having lain with Periboëa,
Begot great-souled Nausithous, who ruled
'Mid the Phæacians, and two sons he had,
Rhexenor and Alcinous : the first
Apollo of the silver bow struck down
At home, when yet a bridegroom, without son,
Leaving one only child, Arete. Her
Alcinous made his wife, and honoured her
As no one else is honoured on the earth
Of all the wives who nowadays keep house
Under their lords ; so hath she been and is
Heartily honoured of Alcinous
And her own sons and folk, who look on her
As goddess, and salute her when she goes
About the city : yea, for she herself
Doth not lack judgment, and she ends the feuds
E'en of the men folk of her women friends.
If only thou find favour in her heart,
Then there is hope for thee to see thy friends
And reach thy high-roofed home, and native land.'

With that, keen-eyed Athene went her way.
From pleasant Scheria o'er the tireless sea.
She came to Marathon and wide-wayed Athens,
And entered in Erectheus' solid house.
But to Alcinous' famous palace came
Odysseus, and he thought on many things
Stopping, before he reached the brazen threshold.
For on great-heart Alcinous' vaulted house
There lit a gleam as of the sun or moon :
This side and that from door to inner door
Ran walls of bronze with blue enamel frieze,

And golden doors shut in the solid house :
And on the brazen threshold silver door-posts
Stood, with a silver lintel resting on them :
The handle was of gold : on either side
Were dogs of gold and silver, which Hephæstus
Had fashioned with his cunning skill to guard
The palace of great-heart Alcinous : these
Were deathless and unageing all their days.
Ranged by the wall from door to inner door
On either side along were seats whereon
Were spread light woven covers, women's work :
There the Phæacian chiefs were wont to sit
At drink or meat : for they had store unfailing.
And on strong pedestals stood gilded boys
With blazing torches in their hands to light
The banqueters by night adown the hall :
And in his palace he had fifty bond-maids,
Some at the hand-mills grinding yellow corn,
Some weaving webs or seated, twirling yarn,
Restless as leaves of the tall poplar tree ;
So close they weave it that the liquid oil
Drips off it. As Phæacian men o'er all
Are skilled to drive the swift ships on the deep,
So are their women cunning at the loom,
Because Athene gave them plenteously
Skill in fine work and understanding minds.

And near the gates outside the court there is
A great four-acre orchard with a hedge
On either side, and there the trees grow tall
And thrive, bright-fruited apples, pomegranates,
Pears and sweet figs and olives in their bloom,
Whereof the fruit nor perishes nor fails
Winter or summer throughout all the year ;
But evermore the West wind as it blows
Quickens some fruit to life and ripens other.

Pear groweth old on pear, apple on apple;
Cluster on cluster waxes, fig on fig.
There too he hath a fruitful vineyard planted,
Whereof one part, warm and on level ground,
Is for the drying grapes, while other kinds
Men gather, and tread others in the press :
The unripe grapes are in the fore-front, some
Shedding their bloom and others turning black ;
And there by the last row of vines are planted
Trim garden beds of all kinds, full of colour
Throughout the year : and therein are two springs,
Whereof the one branches all through the garden,
The other runs toward the lofty house
Under the courtyard threshold, and therefrom
Townsfolk draw water. In Alcinous' house
Such were the splendid bounties of the gods.

There stood and gazed the sore-tried goodly man
Odysseus, but when he had gazed his fill,
Quickly he crossed the step into the house :
And there he, found the chiefs and counsellors
Of the Phæacians pouring from their cups
Libations to the keen-eyed Argus-slayer,
To whom they used to pour the last libation
When they were of a mind to go to rest.
But through the hall the sore-tried goodly man
Odysseus went, hid in the cloak of mist
Athena dropped about him, till he reached
Arete and the king Alcinous.
About Arete's knees he cast his hands
And then from off him rolled the wondrous mist,
And a hush fell on all within the room
Seeing a man, and as they looked on him
They marvelled. But Odysseus made his prayer :
‘ Arete, daughter of godlike Rhexenor,
Lo, to thy husband, to thy knees I come

After much toil, yea, to these banqueters—
And may the gods grant them a happy life,
And each hand on to his sons after him
His home possessions and what dues of honour
His people have assigned him ! But for me,
Speed ye my sending, that I come the quicker
To mine own land ; already all too long
Have I endured afflictions, far from friends.'

So saying, down he sate upon the hearth
In the ashes by the fire ; and silence fell
On all. But Echeueus spoke at last,
An ancient lord and a Phœacian elder,
And famous speaker, wise in lore of old.
He, wishing well, spake in their midst and said :

' Alcinous, lo, 'tis not the better way
Nor seemly, for a stranger to be sitting
Upon the ground in ashes on the hearth,
While these hang back, and wait for thee to speak !
Come, lift the stranger up and make him take
A silver-studded chair, and bid the heralds
Mix wine, that we may pour libations also
To Zeus, the lord of lightning, who attends
On reverend suppliants ; and let the housewife
Serve him with supper of her household store.'

But when the strong Alcinous heard, he took
Odysseus, wise and crafty, by the hand
And raised him from the hearth, and made him sit
Upon a shining settle, whence he bade
His son arise, valiant Laodamas,
Who sate next him and was his best-beloved.
Then a maid brought him water for his hands,
And poured it from a fair gold ewer for washing
Above a silver basin ; and drew up
Near him a polished board ; and a grave dame
Brought and set bread and added many dainties,

Providing generously of what she had.
So then Odysseus, sore-tried goodly man,
Took food and drink ; and strong Alcinous spake
Then to the herald :

‘ Pontonous, mix the bowl and serve the wine
To all in hall, that we may pour libations
Also to Zeus whose joy is in the thunder,
For he attendeth reverend suppliants.’

So said he, and Pontonous mixed the wine
Like honey to the heart, and first he poured
Drops for libation in the cups, and then
Served out to all ; and when they had poured forth
Libations and had drunk to their content,
Then spake Alcinous in their midst, and said :

‘ Hear ye, Phæacian chiefs and counsellors,
That as the spirit bids me I may speak.
Now that the feast is over, get you home
And each to rest ; but in the morning we
Will call more elders here, and entertain
The stranger in our halls, and sacrifice
Fair victims to the gods, and then take thought
For sending him, so that the stranger may
Reach his own country without toil or pain
Under our convoy, happily and soon,
However far his home is : on the way
He shall not suffer hurt nor harm till he
Sets foot in his own land ; but after that
Must he abide whatever fortune Fate
And the Stern Spinsters span for him at birth,
The hour his mother bore him. But if he
Is one of the immortals come from heaven,
Why, then the gods are planning a new trick
Against us : they have always heretofore
Been manifestly seen among us, when
We offer glorious hecatombs, and feast

Beside us, sitting even where we sit :
Yea, if one faring on a lonely way
Meets them, they make no mystery of it :
For we are near akin to them, as are
The Cyclops folk and the wild Giant clans.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Far be that thought from thee, Alcinous !
I am not like the immortals of wide heaven
In form or stature, but like men who die :
Whomso ye know of men most sorrow-laden,
With them would I compare myself in griefs.
Yea, I could tell you yet a longer tale
Of all the many toils the gods have sent me ;
But as for me, suffer me now to eat,
Despite my grief—for there is nothing grosser
Than the voracious belly, which insists
That a man mind it, howsoe'er he be
Distressed and full of sorrow in his heart :
So full of sorrow am I ; but my belly
Is always ordering me to eat and drink,
And makes me utterly forget the pains
I have endured, and bids me fill myself.
But ye, O stir yourselves at break of day
To set me, luckless one, so sorely tried,
On mine own soil—and then farewell to life,
Once I have seen mine own domain again,
My slaves, and the tall roof of my great house ! '

So said he, and all praised him and bade send
The stranger home, since he had said aright ;
But when they had poured libation and had drunk
To heart's content, home they all went to rest.
But in the hall was brave Odysseus left.
Arete and godlike Alcinous
Sate by him : and the servants cleared away
The dinner dishes : and to them spake first

White-armed Arete, for she recognised
His cloak and tunic, goodly garments, which
She had herself wrought with her waiting-maids :
And unto him she spoke with wingéd words :

‘ Stranger, this one thing I must ask thee first,
Who art thou among men, and whence ? and who
Gave thee these clothes ? Indeed didst thou not say
Thou camest hither wandering o’er the deep ? ’

And deep Odysseus answered her and said :
‘ Hard were it, Queen, from end to end to tell
My troubles, for the heavenly gods have given me
Full many : but the thing thou askest me
I will declare to thee. There is an island
Ogygia, and far out to sea it lies ;
There Atlas’ daughter dwells, Calypso crafty,
Fair-haired, a mighty goddess, and she hath
No consort or of gods or mortal men.
But me, alas ! some god brought to her hearth,
Alone, for Zeus with his white bolt had smitten
And cleft my swift ship ’mid the wine-dark sea ;
There perished all the rest of my brave band,
But tight I gripped the keel of my curved ship,
And so for nine days drifted. On the tenth
Black night the gods brought me unto the isle
Ogygia, where that mighty goddess dwells,
Fair-haired Calypso ; and she took me in
With kindly cheer, and fed me, and averred
That she would make me deathless and unageing
For all my days. Yet could she not persuade
My heart within me. There for seven long years
I sojourned, daily watering with my tears
The immortal raiment which Calypso gave me :
But when the eighth year in its circle came
Insistently she bade me go, because
Zeus sent some message, or her own mind changed.

So on a tight-bound raft she sent me forth ;
And gave me ample store, sweet wine and bread,
And clad me in imperishable robes,
And sent a mild and gentle breeze to blow.
Ten days and seven across the sea I sailed,
And on the eighteenth loomed the shadowy hills
Of your own land, and my poor heart rejoiced ;
Alas ! for I was fated still to mate
With plenteous trouble, which the earthquake lord,
Poseidon, raised against me ; for he stirred
The winds, and barred my pathway, and aroused
A sea too great for words : nor would the surge,
For all my groanings, let me ride my raft.
Indeed the tempest smashed it ; but I swam
And cleft through yonder gulf, till wind and wave
Bore me and brought me nigh unto your coast.
If I had tried to land, the breakers must
Have hurled me on the shore, and dashed me up
Against great rocks in a most dismal place ;
But I gave up and swam on till I reached
A river, where the place seemed best to me,
Being smooth of rocks and sheltered from the wind.
I staggered out, and fell, and got my breath,
And deathless night came on. So then I left
The sky-fed river, and lay down to sleep
Among the bushes, heaping leaves about me ;
And some god shed upon me boundless sleep.
So there among the leaves with stricken heart
All night till dawn and till the noon I slept ;
The sun was west when sweet sleep let me go :
And on the shore I saw thy daughter's maids
At play, and there was she among them, like
A goddess. I appealed to her, and she
Failed in no whit of fine perception, but
Behaved as thou couldst hardly hope from one

So young at casual meeting, for the young
Are always thoughtless. And she let me bathe
There in the stream, and bread and sparkling wine
Enough she gave me—and these clothes as well.
For all my grief, this have I told thee true.'

Then in reply to him Alcinous said :

' Sir, but my daughter surely did not judge
Herein aright, in that she did not bring thee
With her attendant women to my house,
Since first to her thou madest thy appeal.'

But deep Odysseus answered him and said .

' Prince, do not chide for this thy blameless daughter.
Indeed she bade me follow with her maids,
But I refused for fear and shame, lest thou
Beholding might be clouded in thy heart ;
For jealous are we earthy tribes of men.'

Again Alcinous answered him, and said :

' I have not, stranger, such a heart within me
As rashly to be wroth : in all things best
Due measure is. I would, O Father Zeus,
Athene and Apollo, that one such
As thou, and being of like mind with me,
Might wed my daughter, and be called my son,
Abiding here ; so would I give thee house
And wealth, if thou wouldst stay of thine own will ;
But otherwise shall no Phæacian keep thee,
Nor Father Zeus approve it ! For thy sending
I will appoint a time, that thou mayst know,
Even the morrow. Then shalt thou lie down
O'ercome with sleep ; and men shall row thee o'er
Calm waters, till thou comest to thy country
And home and whatsoever place thou wilt ;
Yes, be it even far beyond Eubœa,
Which is the uttermost of lands, so say
Those of my people who beheld it, when

They carried Rhadamanthus the fair-haired
Upon his way to Tityus, son of Earth.
Ay, there they went and without toil fulfilled
Their journey, and the self-same day came home.
So shalt thou too judge for thyself how much
The best my ships are, and my lads excel
At tossing the salt water with the oar.'

At that Odysseus, sore-tried goodly man,
Was glad, and spake in prayer and called aloud :
' O Father Zeus, grant that Alcinous bring
To pass all this that he hath said ! so shall
His fame be never quenched on earth that gives
The grain, and I shall come to mine own land.'

Meanwhile, as thus they spake with one another,
White-armed Arete bade her waiting-maids
Set out a bedstead 'neath the portico,
And cast fine purple rugs on it, and spread
Over them coverlets, and thick fleecy cloaks
On top of all for outward covering.

So torch in hand out from the hall they went ;
But when they had made busy and had spread
The solid couch, they came and called Odysseus :

' Up, stranger, now and get thee to thy rest ;
Thy bed is made.' So said they, and it seemed
To him a wondrous joy to be a-bed.

There then he slept, the sore-tried goodly man
Odysseus, on the corded bedstead 'neath
The echoing cloister. But Alcinous
Lay down to sleep within the midmost room
Of his tall house, and by his side the queen
His wife, who had prepared the bed for him.

BOOK VIII

But when the early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, then strong Alcinous rose from bed,
And likewise rose Odysseus, seed of Zeus,
Sacker of cities. Strong Alcinous led
The way to the Phæacians' meeting-place,
Which was established for them near the ships.
Thither they came, and on the smooth stone seats
Sate, each by each. But through the city passed
Pallas Athene, taking on herself
The form of wise Alcinous' messenger,
Scheming to send great-heart Odysseus home,
And by each man she paused and said to him :

‘ Hither, Phæacian chiefs and counsellors,
To the assembly come ye, that ye may
Learn of this stranger, who is newly come
To wise Alcinous' house, a wanderer
O'er sea, in presence like the immortal gods.’

Her words excited each man's will and wish,
And soon the meeting-places and the seats
Were full of gathering men ; and many marvelled
When they beheld the wise son of Laertes ;
For on his head and neck Athene shed
A wondrous grace, and made him to the eye
Taller and stronger, that he should obtain
Of all Phæacians love, respect and awe,
And might accomplish all the feats wherein
They put him to the trial. Now when they
Had all assembled and were met together,
Then in their midst Alcinous spake and said :

‘ Hear ye, Phæacian chiefs and counsellors,

That as the spirit bids me I may speak.
This stranger—who he is I do not know—
Hath come to my house in his wanderings,
Whether from eastern or from western folk.
He urges us to send him on his way,
And begs for an assurance. So let us,
As of aforetime, speed him on his journey :
For never yet did man who reached my house
Abide here long in grief, for lack of sending.
So come now, let us haul a black ship down
To the bright salt upon her maiden voyage ;
And choose ye from the people two and fifty
Of the young men who were proved best before ;
And having lashed the oars tight to the thwarts,
Get you ashore, and alter that come up
To me, and get a banquet ready quickly.
I will make good provision for you all.
That is my order to the youths ; but come,
Ye others, sceptred lords, to my fair house,
To entertain the stranger in the halls .
Let no man say me nay. And summon hither
Demodocus, the holy bard : for God
Hath given him song, above all men, to please,
In whatso way his spirit bids him sing.'

He spake and led the way : there followed him
The sceptred lords : a herald went to fetch
The godly bard. And two and fifty youths,
Picked men, went down, as he commanded them,
Unto the shore of the unresting sea.
And being come down to the ship and sea,
'They dragged the black ship down to the deep water ;
And in the black ship set the mast and sails,
And fixed the oars fast in the leather loops,
In order all ; and hoisted the white sails.
High out they moored her in the roadstead ; then

They went to wise Alcinous' great palace.
The porticoes and courts and rooms were filled
With gathering men, a many, young and old.
For them Alcinous slew a dozen sheep,
Eight boars with gleaming tusches, and a pair
Of rolling-gaited oxen. These they flayed,
And dressed them and prepared a goodly feast.

Now drew the herald near and with him brought
The loyal minstrel, whom the Muse loved dear,
And good and evil gave him, of his sight
She reft him, but she granted him sweet song.
For him Pontonous the herald set
A silver-studded chair amid the guests,
By a tall pillar leaning it, and hung
His clear-toned lyre upon a peg close by
Above his head, and showed him how to lay
His hands on it. And at his side he placed
A basket, a good table, and a cup
Of wine to drink when so his heart inclined.
So they put out their hands to the good fare
That lay before them ; but when they had had
Their fill of food and drink, the Muse impelled
The bard to sing the deeds of mighty men ;
Even that song whose fame before had reached
Wide heaven, to wit the quarrel of Odysseus
With Peleus' son. Achilles ; how they once
Strove at a brilliant banquet of the gods
With furious words, and happy in his mind
Was Agamemnon, king of men, because
The best of the Achæans were at strife :
For when he crossed the threshold stone to seek
An oracle in holy Pytho once,
Phœbus Apollo had revealed to him
That so it must befall : for in those days
The vanward wave of woe was rolling up

For Trojans and for Greeks by great Zeus' will.

That was the song the famous minstrel sang.
But with his massive hands Odysseus caught
His great dark cloak and pulled it o'er his head,
And hid his noble face, for he felt shame
Should the Phæacians see him weep ; indeed,
Each time the holy minstrel ceased his song,
He wiped his tears away and plucked the cloak
Down from his head, and seized the two-armed cup
And poured forth to the gods : but every time
The bard began again (and the chief men
Of the Phæacians bade him sing because
They loved his words), again Odysseus would
Conceal his head and moan. Now none of all
The others saw his weeping, but alone
Alcinous marked and heeded, sitting by him,
And heard his heavy groans : and straight he said
To the Phæacians, lovers of the oar :

‘ Hark ye, Phæacian chiefs and counsellors,
By now our hearts are filled with the fair feast,
And with the lyre that is the yoke-fellow
Of the rich feast. But now let us go forth,
And try our divers games, so that the stranger
After he reaches home may tell his friends
How we surpass all other men in boxing,
In wrestling, leaping and in speed of foot.’

So saying he led the way : they followed him.”
The herald hung the loud lyre on the peg,
And by the hand he took Demodocus
And led him from the hall, and guided him
By the same way whereby the rest, the chief
Phæacians in the land, had gone to watch
The games. So went they to the meeting-place
And with them went much people, beyond count.
And up rose many noble youths—there rose

Acroneus, Ocyalus, Nauteus,
Eretmeus, Elatreus, Anchialus,
Ponteus, Proreus, and Ambêsineus,
Prymneus and Thoon and Amphialus,
The son of Polyneus, son of Tectorn ;
Likewise arose Euryalus, the peer
Of murderous Ares, son of Naubolus,
In form and looks the best of all Phæacians
Next to unstained Laodamas. Likewise
Three sons of good Alcinous stood up,
Laodamas and godlike Clytoneus
And Halius. These then in the foot-race first
Made trial ; full-speed from the start they strained,
And all flew forward in a pack up-raising
The dust along the plain ; but swiftest far
Was noble Clytoneus ; by the length
Of one mule's furrow in a fallow field
He shot in front and reached the crowd and left
The rest behind. Then as the second test
They wrestled strongly, and Euryalus
At that beat all their best ; but at the jump
Amphialus was far the first, as was
Elatreus with the weight, and in the boxing
Laodamas, Alcinous' good son.
And when they all had had enough of sports,
Laodamas, the king's son, said to them :

‘ Come, friends, and ask the stranger if he is
Expert and skilled in any game : at least
In build he is not poor : in leg and thigh
Ay, and above, in arms and brawny neck
Full strong he looks ; no, 'tis not youth he lacks,
But many blows have broken him. Indeed
I know of nothing that confounds a man
Worse than the sea, though he be ne'er so strong.’

Then answer to him made Euryalus :

‘Laodamas, in season hast thou said it.
Go thou and challenge him, and say thy say.’

And hearing that, Alcinous’ good son
Stepped in the midst and to Odysseus said :
‘Come thou, sir stranger, too, and try a bout
If thou hast practised any. Like it is
Thou knowest games, for no man all his life
Hath greater glory than the fame he wins
With his own hands and feet. Nay, come and try,
And cast care off thy mind : thy going hence *
Shall not be long delayed, for even now
The ship is launched, and ready are the crew.’

But deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘Laodamas, why mock me with this challenge ?
Griefs in my mind have greater place than games :
Much have I suffered and have laboured much
Ere this, and now amid your congregation
I sit and long for my return, and make
Entreaty of the king and all the people.’

At that Euryalus took up the tale,
And flung a taunt at him : ‘No, no, indeed, sir !
I do not take thee for a man of skill
In games—and thereof men play many kinds—
I take thee for a man who comes and goes
With his oared galley, captain of a crew
Of traders, keen upon his freight, in charge
Of home-bound cargo, and the gains of greed ;
But for an athlete ? No !’

Then answered deep Odysseus with a scowl :
‘Sir, thou hast not said well : thou art as one
Blind with presumption. So it is : the gods
Give not to all alike their gracious gifts,
Form, wit, and speech. One man comes short in looks,
But on his words God sets a crown of beauty
And men delight to see him ; and he speaks

With sure command and winning modesty,
A star of the debate, and like a god
Men watch him as he moves about the city.
Another may be like the gods in presence,
But on his words is set no crown of grace ;
So 'tis with thee : pre-eminent in beauty
(Nor could a god amend thee) thou art weak
In understanding. Thy discourteous words
Have stirred the spirit in me. I am not
Unversed in games, as thou pretendest ; no !
I judge I was among the best of them,
While I could trust my youth and hands : but now
I am possessed by misery and pains,
For much have I endured in passages
Of mortal wars and of distressful waves ;
Yet even so, for all that I have suffered,
I will make trial of thy tests : for words
Can bite the soul, and thine have quickened me.'

So saying, cloak and all, he started up
And seized a discus, larger than the rest
And massive, not a little heavier
Than the Phæacians used among themselves ;
And whirled, and sped it from his brawny hand.
Loud booming went the stone, and the Phæacians
Of the long oar, those famous mariners,
Crouched to the ground before its rush : and lightly
Shot from his hand, beyond the marks of all
It flew ; and in the semblance of a man
Athene marked the range, and cried to him :
' Why, e'en a blind man groping with his hands
Could tell thy throw, sir, for it is not lost
Among the ruck, but out and out is first !
For this bout then, be of good heart : for none
Of the Phæacians shall attain thereto,
Much less surpass it.'

So said she, and the sore-tried goodly man
Rejoiced to see a true friend in the lists :
And spake in lighter tone 'mid the Phæacians :
' Now reach that cast, young men ! and I anon
Methinks will throw again as far or further.
But for the rest, if any man hath spirit
And heart thereto, come let him match with me
(Since ye exceedingly have angered me),
In boxing, wrestling or in running too,
I care not which—of all Phæacians, save
Laodamas himself, he is my host,
And who would strive with one who entertains him ?
Foolish the man is and of no account
Who challenges at games his own good host
'Mid stranger folk ! he only mars his prospects.
But of the rest no man do I refuse
And hold none lightly : but I would fain know
And prove them face to face ; for I am not
Unskilled in any games devised by men.
Well have I learned to wield the polished bow,
And ever would be first to hit my man
Among the press of foes, however many
Comrades stood by and marked their men as well ;
When we Achæans in the land of Troy
Shot, only Philoctetes bettered me ;
I was the best, I say, of all the others,
Yes, of all men who live by bread on earth ;
But with the men of old I would not match,
Alcides nor Cechalian Eurytus,
Who strove with even gods in archery :
Wherefore great Eurytus died all too soon,
Nor did old age come on him in his halls,
For that Apollo slew him in his wrath
Because he challenged him to shoot a match.
And further than another man can shoot

Can I let drive a spear : in running only
I am afraid that one of your Phæacians
May beat me ; for too long and savagely
Have I been knocked about in many waters,
Because I could not always nurse myself
Aboard my ship ; and so my limbs are loosed.'

So spake he, and they all were hushed to silence ;
Only Alcinous answered him, and said :
' Sir, since thou speakest not ungraciously
Thus in our midst, but art intent to show
The prowess that goes with thee, being vexed
That yonder man approached thee in the lists,
And mocked thee, speaking lightly of thy worth
As no one who knew how to speak would do :
Come, now, lay up my words, that thou mayst tell
Some other hero—when thou art at supper
At home with wife and children, and rememberest
Our skill—the gifts that from our fathers' time
Zeus hath till now vouchsafed us. For we are
Neither at boxing nor at wrestling perfect,
But speedy runners and the best of seamen :
Our taste is all for feast and dance and music,
Changes of raiment and hot baths and sleep.
But come, ye best of the Phæacian dancers,
Make sport ; so that when he comes home our guest
May tell his friends how we excel all others
In sailing, running, and in dance and song.
Go, some one, quick, and fetch Demodocus
His clear-toned lyre, left in my house somewhere.'

So said Alcinous the godlike. Then
The herald rose to fetch the hollow lyre
From the king's house. Now, nine in all, stood up
The chosen umpires of the people who
Were wont to see to order in the lists ;
And they marked out a good wide ring, and smoothed

A place for dancing, and the herald came
 Bringing Demodocus his clear-toned lyre.
 Then in the midst he stepped, and round him stood
 Boys in the bloom of youth skilled in the dance,
 And with their tread they beat the hallowed floor ;
 And at the twinkling rhythm of their feet
 Odysseus gazed, and marvelled in his mind.

Anon the bard struck up a prelude fair,
 Ere he went on to sing the love of Ares
 And fair-crowned Aphrodite.†

* † *

This tale the famous singer sang : and as
 Odysseus listened, he rejoiced at heart,
 And likewise the Phæacians of long oars,
 Those mariners renowned.

Then the king called on his two elder sons
 To dance alone, for with them none could vie.
 So in their hands they took the bright blue ball
 Which cunning Polybus had made for them ;
 And bending backward one would throw it up
 Towards the shadowy clouds, and one would leap
 And lightly catch it ere his foot met ground :
 And when they had tried their skill in upward throws,
 Both fell a-dancing on the bounteous earth
 Tossing the ball ; and down the lists their mates
 Stood beating time ; and a great noise arose

Then brave Odysseus to Alcinous said :
 ‘ Alcinous, Prince, renowned o’er all the people,
 Thy promise that thy dancers were the best
 Hath been made good : I am amazed to watch them.’

At that the strong Alcinous rejoiced,
 And spake at once to his sea-folk Phæacians :
 ‘ Hark ye, Phæacian chiefs and counsellors,

* Lines 268-366, rejected by the ancient critics, are omitted.

The stranger seems to me of right good sense :
Come, let us give him a guest-gift, as is
Most meet, for in our land twelve glorious kings
Bear sway, and I myself am the thirteenth ,
Now bring each man of you a new-washed cloak
And tunic, and a talent of fine gold ;
And let us mass them all at once together,
That with our presents in his hands, our guest
May go to supper glad at heart : but let
Euryalus make amends to him himself
With speech and gift, because he spoke amiss.'

He spake, and all agreed to have it so.
Each sent his messenger to fetch the gifts :
And then Euryalus in answer said :
' Alcinous, Prince, renowned o'er all the people,
As thou commandest, I will make amends
Unto the stranger. He shall have this sword,
Of bronze throughout, with silver hilt, and sheath
About it, turned from new-cut ivory .
And to him it shall be a thing of price '

Therewith into his hand he put the sword
Of silver work, and spake with wingéd words .
' Hail, stranger sir, and if there has been spoken
One bitter word, let storm-winds seize on it
And blow it right away ! But may the gods
Grant thee to see thy wife and reach thy home,
Since long hast thou been suffering, far from friends.'

And deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' All hail to thee too, friend ! and may the gods
Vouchsafe thee happiness, and ne'er mayst thou
Regret this sword which thou hast given me,
Making atonement to me with thy words.'

With that, he slung the silver-studded sword
About his shoulders. And the sun went down,
And the fine gifts were brought for him ; and these

The lordly heralds bore to the king's palace,
And there the sons of good Alcinous took
The gifts, and placed them by their honoured mother.
Then the strong king Alcinous led the way,
And in they came and sate on the high seats ;
And to Arete strong Alcinous said

‘ Come, lady, bring me here a special chest,
The best thou hast, and place a new-washed cloak
And vest therein : and do ye heat a cauldron
Upon the fire, and warm the water for him,
That having bathed and seen them all displayed,
The gifts our noble chieftains have brought hither,
He may take pleasure in the feast and hearing
The sounds of song. And he shall have of me
This fair gold goblet, so that all his days
He may remember me, when he pours forth
To Zeus and all the other gods, at home.’

At that Arete bade her waiting-maids
Set a great cauldron with what speed they might
Upon the fire. So on the blaze they set
A cauldron for the bath and poured in water,
And took and kindled billets underneath .
Around the cauldron's belly ran the fire
Until the water warmed. Meantime Arete
Brought for the stranger from her treasure-room
A handsome chest, and packed the splendid gifts,
Raiment and gold, which the Phreacians gave him ;
And she herself put in a goodly tunic
And cloak, and spake to him with wingéd words :

‘ See to the lid thyself now : knot a cord
About it quick, lest someone by the way
Despoil thee, when hereafter as thou goest
On the black ship thou liest sleeping sweet.’

And when Odysseus, sore-tried goodly man,
Heard that, he fixed the lid and quickly tied

A tricky knot, which once the lady Circe
Had taught him. Then forthwith the housewife bade him
Go to the bath and bathe ; and he rejoiced
At heart to see warm water, for he had
Not often had such comforts since he left
Fair-haired Calypso's home, though while with her
He had continual tendance like a god.
And when the maids had given him his bath,
And rubbed him down with oil, and cast about him
A tunic and fair cloak, forth from the bath
He came, to join the men about their wine.

Now by a pillar of the well-built roof
Nausicaa stood, in her god-given beauty,
And marvelled as her eyes beheld Odysseus,
And spake and called to him with wingéd words :

‘ Stranger, goodbye ! yea and hereafter, when
In thine own land thou art, remember me,
Since to me first thou owest the price of life.’

And deep Odysseus answered her and said :
‘ Nausicaa, mighty-souled Alcinous’ child,
May Zeus the thunderer, mate of Here, grant
That I reach home and see the day that brings
Me back ! So will I pray to thee e’en there
For ever all my days as to a god ;
For thou, O maid, hast given me my life.’

With that he took his seat beside the king
Alcinous ; and now they served the portions
And mixed the wine. Then came the herald near,
Bringing Demodocus the trusty bard,
Much honoured of the people. Him he placed
Amid the banqueters, and propped his chair
By a tall pillar. Thereon wise Odysseus
Carved from the saddle of a white-tusked boar,
A slice (though more was left upon the joint)
Covered with gravy ; and he called the herald :

‘Lo, herald, take this to Demodocus
That he may eat, and I will bid him hail,
Despite my grief. For ’mid all men on earth
Minstrels have reverence and praise, because
The Muse hath taught to them the paths of song
And loves the tribe of singers.’

So said he, and the herald bore the portion
And gave it to the lord Demodocus,
Into his hand, who took it and was glad.
So they put forth their hands to the good fare
Lying prepared before them ; but when they
Had had their fill of meat and drink, then said
The deep Odysseus to Demodocus :

‘Demodocus, beyond all mortal men
In truth I praise thee, whether ’twas the Muse,
Daughter of Zeus, that taught thee, or Apollo :
For well and truly dost thou sing the fate
Of the Achæans, all they did and suffered,
All they endured, as if thou haply hadst
Been there thyself, or heard the tale from others :
But come, change now ; and sing how there was built
The wooden horse, which with Athene’s aid
Epeius made, the snare which good Odysseus
Led up into the citadel, when he
Had filled it with the men who wasted Troy.
If thou indeed rehearse me this aright,
Then will I tell all men how amply God
Hath granted thee the gift of song divine.’

So said he, and the minstrel, god-impelled,
Began, and showed his song. He took the tale up
Just where the Argive host had fired their huts
And sailed aboard their galleys, while the men
With famed Odysseus, hidden in the horse,
Were sitting in the assembly-place of Troy ;
For they of Troy themselves had dragged it up

Into the fort. So there it stood, and they
Around it sate, and much vague talk there was ;
Three divers plans attracted them—to split
The hollow timber with the ruthless bronze,
Or drag it up the brow and hurl it down,
Or let it stand, a great propitiation
To please the gods : as in the end indeed
It had to happen. For it was their doom
To perish, once their town had taken in
The huge wood horse, wherein were sitting all
The bravest of the Argives, bearing death
And doom unto the Trojans. And he sang
How from the horse the sons of the Achæans
Poured out, and left their hollow hiding-place
And sacked the town : and how and where each man
Plundered the lofty town, and how Odysseus,
As Ares fierce, with godlike Menelaus
Made for the dwelling of Deiphobus ;
'Twas there (said he) he braved the fiercest fight
And won at last by grace of high Athene.

So sang he then, the famous bard. Howbeit
Odysseus' heart was melted, and a tear
Fell from his eye and wet his cheek. And as
A woman wailing throws herself about
Her husband, who has fallen in defence
Of his own folk and city, in the struggle
To ward off from his city and his children
The day of torment ; as she sees him dying,
Gasping for breath, she clings to him and shrieks
Aloud, while from behind the foemen smite
Her back and shoulders with the shafts of spears,
And lead her into bondage, to a portion
Of toil and woe, and with most piteous grief
Her cheeks are wasted : e'en so sadly dropped
Tears from Odysseus' eyes. Now none of all

The others saw him weeping ; but alone
Alemous marked his heavy groans, and straight
To the Phæacians, lovers of the oar, said he :
 ‘ Hark ye, Phæacian chiefs and counsellors !
Now let Demodocus check his loud lyre,
For in no wise to all alike this song
Of his is pleasing. From the time that we
Began to sup, and he the holy bard
Was moved to sing, this stranger hath not ceased
From bitter moans. Sore griet belike hath come
About his heart. So let the minstrel cease
That we may all be glad, both hosts and guest,
Since ’tis far better so. Lo, all these things
Were ordered for the honoured stranger’s sake,
His convoy, and the friendly gifts we give him
Out of our love. For in a brother’s place
The stranger and the suppliant stand, to him
Whose wits have e’en short range. Now, sir, do thou
No longer hide with cunning thought whate’er
I ask thee ; for ’tis better to be frank.
Tell me the name whereby at home they called thee,
Thy sire and mother, citizens and neighbours ;
For without name is none of all mankind,
Nor mean nor noble, from his hour of birth ;
But parents name them all when they are born.
Tell me thy country and thy race and city,
So that our ships may mind their course thereto,
And bring thee there : for the Phæacians have
No pilots and no helms, like other ships :
Their very ships conceive the minds and thoughts
Of men, and know the cities and rich fields
Of folk ; and swiftly cross the great salt gulf
Hidden in mist and cloud ; they never go
In fear of wreck or loss. Yet once I heard
Nausithous my father tell this story :

The sea-god, so he said, was wroth with us,
Because we give safe escort to all men ;
Poseidon, he declared, would one day wreck
A sturdy ship of our Phæacian folk,
As back she came upon the misty deep
From convoy ; and would cast about our city
A mighty mountain. So that old man said :
And these same things the god will bring to pass
Or leave undone, as his good pleasure is.
But come, now tell me this, and plainly say .
Which way hast thou been wandering, and hast come
Unto what lands of men ? tell me of them
And of their fair-laid cities, both of those
Who were unkind and cruel and unjust,
And who were friendly with god-fearing minds :
And tell me why thou weepest and dost groan
In spirit, when thou hearest of the fate
Of the Danaan Argives and of Troy.
This the gods wrought ; they span a skein of death
For men, that there might be a song for those
Yet to be born. Was it some kin of thine,
Who fell in front of Ilios—some true man,
Thy daughter's mate or father of thy wife—
Such as are next a man's own blood and stock ?
Or else was it some comrade fond of thee,
A good, true man ? For like a brother is
A comrade with an understanding heart.'

BOOK IX

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
Alcinous, Prince, renowned o'er all the people,
Yea, 'tis a joy to listen to a minstrel
Such as is this one, like the gods in voice.
For me, I know of no such perfect pleasure
As when good cheer hath hold of all the people,
And feasters in the halls in order sitting
List to a singer, having tables by them
Laden with bread and meat, and the wine-bearer
Draws from the mixing-bowl and serves the wine
And pours it in the cups : this to my mind
Is of all things the fairest. But thy heart
Inclines to ask me of my mournful sorrows—
More pain and grief for me ! What shall I tell thee
Or first, or last of all ? for woes abundant
The gods who live in heaven have given me.
First will I tell my name, so that ye too
May know it ; and that I hereafter, when
I have escaped the day that knows not pity,
May be your host, though far away I dwell.

'I am Laertes' son, Odysseus, known
To men for all my wiles, and unto heaven
My fame has gone. I live in Ithaca,
Clear-seen, where is a mountain, Neriton,
With waving woods, conspicuous from afar :
And round about are many islands lying
One by another close, Dulichium,
And Samê, and Zacynthus of the woods.
Low on the sea it lies, nearest the gloom ;
Apart, the others face the dawn and sun :

A rugged isle, but a good nurse of youth.
And for myself, no sweeter sight I know
Than a man's land. Calypso, that fair goddess,
Would, well I know, have kept me with her there
In her deep caves, desiring me for mate :
So too would Circe, that *Ææan* witch,
Have kept me by her, wanting me for mate ;
But they could never sway my heart within me ;
So surely nought is sweeter than a man's
Own land and parents, even though he dwell
Far off in a rich house in a strange land,
Away from his begetters. But come, let me
Tell thee too of my woful journeying,
Which Zeus laid on me as I came from Troy.

‘ The wind that carried me from *Ilios* bore me
Nigh to the *Cicones*, to *Ismarus* ;
And there I sacked their town and slew their men,
And from the town the women and much wealth
We took, and shared them, that so far as lay
With me, no one might go without his share.
Then I insisted we should flee hot foot,
But they in their great folly would not hearken :
Much wine was drunk, and by the shore they slew
Whole herds of sheep and rolling, shambling kine.
But meanwhile went the *Cicones* and called
For help to other *Cicones*, their neighbours,
But braver and more numerous, who dwelt
Up-country, and could fight from chariots
Or if need were, on foot. So in the morning
They came, as thick as leaves or flowers that spring
In season ; there and then encompassed us,
Unlucky men, an evil doom from Zeus,
To make us suffer heavily. They set
Their battle in array by the swift ships
And fought, and either host assailed the other

With bronze-tipped spears. As long as it was morn
And sacred day was waxing, we maintained
Our ground and kept then greater masses off,
But when the sun turned to the loosing-time
Of cattle, then the Cicones drove in
And routed us Achæans; of each ship
Fell six mailed comrades, but the rest of us
Escaped from death and doom.

‘Thence we sailed onward, sorrowful at heart,
Glad of escape from death, but having lost
Our dear companions: nor would I let move
My curving ships, till we had called three times
On each of those poor fellows who had fallen
Slain by the Cicones upon the plain.
But Zeus who rolls the clouds stirred the North wind
Against my ships in fearful storm, and hid
Both land and sea: and night tore down from heaven.
Then headlong drave the ships, and sails were rent
To ribbons by the violence of the gale:
And so we stowed them in the hold, in fear
Of death, and pulled for land with all our strength.
There without break we lay two days and nights
Eating our hearts in pains and weariness,
But when at last the fair-haired Dawn fulfilled
The third day, then we stepped the masts and hoisted
White sails, and down we sate, while wind and pilots
Guided the ships. And now should I have come
To mine own land unscathed, but wave and current
And North wind beat me back, as I was rounding
Cape Malea, and swept me past Cythera.

‘There for nine days was I by ravening winds
Borne o’er the fishy deep; but on the tenth
We lighted on the Lotus-eaters’ land,
Who eat a flowery food. We went ashore there,
And took in water, and my comrades made

Their meal at once by the swift ships. Now when
We had tasted meat and drink, I sent forth some
Of my command to go and learn what manner
Of men were these who lived on earth by bread.
Two men I chose, and sent a third as herald.
So straight they went, and with the Lotus-eaters
They mixed, nor did the Lotus-eaters plot
My fellows' death, but gave them of the lotus
To taste. Now whosoe'er of them did eat
The honeyed lotus fruit had no more wish
To bring back news nor to return ; but longed
To sojourn there among the Lotus-eaters,
Eating the lotus, careless of return.
Therefore by force I brought them back in tears,
And dragged and bound them in the hollow ships
Below the thwarts : and ordered all the rest
Of my true comrades to make haste aboard
The speedy ships, lest anyone should eat
The lotus, and forget his homeward way.
So quickly they embarked, and sitting well
In order smote the grey sea with their oars.

' Thence we sailed onward, sorrowful at heart,
And reached the land of the Cyclôpes, proud
And lawless folk. They plant not with their hands
Nor plough, relying on the immortal gods ;
But all things grow for them unsown, untilled,
Barley and wheat and vines, with clusters full
Of wine, and Zeus sends rain to prosper them.
They have no gatherings in moot, nor laws ;
But dwell upon the tops of the high hills
In hollow caves, and each lays down the law
Unto his wives and children ; and they reck
Nothing of one another.

' Athwart the harbour of the Cyclops' land
A shaggy island stretches, neither near

To shore nor yet far off, a wooded isle
Where multitudinous the wild goats breed ;
For no man's tread affrights them, nor do trackers,
Used to a hard life in the woods as they
Range o'er the mountain tops, come ever thither :
Nor is it overrun with flocks or ploughings,
But all the time unsown, untilled it lies
Forlorn of men, and feeds the bleating goats.
For the Cyclopes have by them no ships
With vermeil cheeks ; nor keep they ship-builders
To build them sturdy barks which might fulfil
All their desires, sailing to towns of men,
(As oft men cross the sea in ships to go
To one another) such as might have made
Even their isle a thriving settlement.
For in no wise is it a sorry land,
But would bear all things in their season, since
It has soft water-meadows by the shores
Of the grey sea, where never vines need fail,
And level arable there is, whence they
Might cut deep crops in season, for the soil
Is very rich below. Also the isle
Has a fair haven, with no need of moorings,
Nor to cast anchor nor to fasten ropes,
But one may beach one's ship and tarry there
Till crews are minded to put forth, and winds
Blow fair : and at the harbour's head a spring
Of sparkling water wells up from a cave,
And round it poplars grow. In there we sailed,
And through the dark night some god guided us ;
Light there was none to see by ; for a fog
Lay thick about the ships, and the moon gave
No light from heaven, but was beset by clouds.
Then no man's eyes beheld the island, nor
Saw we the long waves rolling on the beach,

Before we ran our sturdy ships ashore.
And having beached them there, we lowered all
The sails, and stepped out on the strand ourselves,
And fell asleep and waited for bright Dawn.

‘ But when the early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, we roamed in wonder through the isle ;
And the wood-nymphs, daughters of Zeus who bears
The ægis, stirred the mountain goats, to give
My company a meal. Anon we took
Our curving bows and long spears from the ships,
And forming in three troops began the chase,
And soon the god gave us abundant game.
Twelve ships had I with me ; to each nine goats
Fell, and for me alone they picked out ten.
So all day long till set of sun we sate
Feasting on meat abundant and sweet wine ;
For the red wine was not yet spent from out
Our ships, but some was left ; for each of us
Had drawn great store in pitchers, when we took
The sacred fortress of the Cicones.
And we looked out upon the Cyclops’ land
Who dwelt near by, and saw the smoke and heard
The noise of men and sheep and goats. But when
The sun had set and darkness had come on
Then we lay down to rest upon the beach.
And at the break of rosy-fingered Dawn
I called my men together and I spake
For all to hear :

‘ “ Stay here, the rest of you, my trusty mates.
But I will go with mine own ship and crew
To prove yon men, what kind of folk they are,
And whether cruel, savage and unjust,
Or good to guests, and of god-fearing mind.”

‘ With that aboard my ship I went and bade
My comrades board her too, and loose the moorings.

Quickly they boarded her and manned the thwarts,
And sitting well in order smote with oars
The grey salt sea. But when we neared the land
That lay hard by, at the land's end we saw
Close to the sea a high cave rooted with laurels,
Where many flocks of sheep and goats were used
To lie o' nights and round about was built
A high enclosure of deep-bedded stones,
Set with tall pines and lofty leafy oaks.
That was the night lair of a monster man,
Who kept his lonely flocks far off, nor mixed
With others, but in solitude he lived
And thought his lawless thoughts. For he was fashioned
A fearsome monstrous thing—not like a man
Who lives by bread, but like some shaggy peak
Of towering hill that stands out all alone.

'And now I bade the rest of my true men
Abide there by the ship, and guard the ship.
While I picked out the twelve best of my mates
And took them with me. Now I had a skin
Of dark, sweet wine 'twas Maro gave it me,
Euanthes' son, priest of Apollo who
Is guardian god of Ismarus, because
Him we had rescued with his wife and child
And treated with all reverence, for he
Dwelt in Apollo's densely wooded grove.
Fine gifts they were he gave me; of wrought gold
Seven talents, and a bowl of solid silver;
And furthermore he filled a dozen jars
With sweet unwatered wine, a drink for gods:
None of his slaves or handmaids knew of it,
Only his wife and he, and one house-dame:
Whene'er they drank that honey-sweet red wine,
He used to mix one cup of it with twenty
Measures of water, and the mixing-bowl

Gave forth a marvellous sweet smell ; and then
Indeed it were no pleasure to abstain.
With that same wine I filled up a great skin,
And took it, and some victuals in a wallet ;
For my high spirit instantly foreboded
That there would come against me a wild man,
Clad in great strength, nor knowing rights nor laws.

‘ Soon to the cave we came, but found him not
Within, for he was herding his fat flocks
Afield ; so we explored the cave and stared
At all it held. The crates were full of cheeses ;
The pens were crammed with lambs and kids ; each kind
Was penned apart, the firstlings by themselves,
And then the later lambs, and then the younglings.
With whey the pans were swimming, and the pails
And well-made buckets into which he milked.
Then spake my men and begged me first to take
Some cheeses and be gone ; and then to haste
And drive the kids and lambs out from the pens
To our swift ship, and so make sail across
Salt water. Yet I did not listen to them
(Far better if I had !), but stayed to see
The man himself, and whether he would give me
The due of strangers. But his coming was not
Predestined to bring gladness to my men.

‘ So then we lit a fire and sacrificed,
And of the cheeses took ourselves and ate,
And sate inside and waited for him, till
Driving his flocks he came. A mighty load
He carried of dry wood for supper-time,
And tossed it with a crash inside the cave,
And shuddering in a niche we shrank : but he
Drove his fat flocks into the roomy cave—
I mean, all those he used to milk—the males,
Both sheep and goats, he left in the deep yard

Outside. And then he raised a huge great stone
And sealed the door. Not two and twenty wains—
Stout four-wheel wains—could lift from earth a rock
As big as that wherewith he barred the door.
Then down he sate and all in turn he milked
The ewes and bleating goats, and 'neath each dam
He placed her young. And presently he curdled
Half the white milk, and set and laid it by
In wicker bowls, and half he stood in pans
For him to take and drink at supper-time ;
And having finished all his busy work,
Then he relit the fire, and sighted us,
And asked :

“ Strangers, who are ye ? and from whence d've sail
The water ways ? are ye out after trade,
Or roving free like pirates o'er the brine,
Who roam abroad at hazard of their lives
And bring mischance on men of alien lands ? ”

‘ So said he, and our hearts within were broken
For fear of his deep voice and monstrous self ;
Yet even so I spake and answered him :

“ See thou, we are Achæans, wanderers
From Troy, and straggling o'er the great sea gulf
With every wind that blows. Making for home
We have come another road, by other paths :
For doubtless Zeus was pleased to will it so.
We claim that we are Agamemnon's men,
The son of Atreus : even now his fame
Is highest under heaven, because he sacked
So great a city and destroyed much people.
But we have lighted here, and to thy knees
Are come, if haply thou wilt show us welcome,
Or otherwise endow us, as is due
To strangers. Nay, strong sir, regard the gods ;
We are thy suppliants, and Zeus vindicates

Strangers and suppliants, that god of strangers
Who still attendeth reverend sojourners."

'I spake, and quickly from his iron heart
He answered me. "Stranger, thou art a fool,
Or thou art come from far, that biddest me
Or fear or shun the gods. We Cyclops folk
Care not for Zeus who bears the ægis, nor
The blessed gods, because we are in truth
Much better folk than they : nor would I spare
Thee or thy friends, to shun the wrath of Zeus,
Save as my own heart bade. But at thy coming
Tell me, where hast thou moored thy sturdy ship,
At the land's end ? or near by ? let me know."

'He spake to try me, but I knew too much
For him to catch me so : and in my turn
I made him answer with a cunning tale.

"My ship Poseidon, lord of earthquake, smote
And brake upon the rocks at your land's end :
For he had brought her all too nigh the headland,
And the wind swept her in from the deep sea :
But I and these escaped the plunge to death."

'I spake ; and he out of his iron heart
Made me no answer ; but sprang up and laid
Hands on my comrades. Two at once he gripped
And smashed them down like puppies on the ground,
And the brain-stuff ran out and wet the earth.
Then limb from limb he carved them, and prepared
His supper ; like a mountain lion he ate
And left not, guts nor flesh nor marrow-bones.
But with a wail we raised our hands to Zeus,
At sight of deeds so foul, and helplessness
Laid hold on us. But when the Cyclops had
Filled his big belly, eating human flesh
And drinking pure milk after, down he lay
Inside the cave, stretched out among his flocks

Then bracing up my nerves I planned to steal
Up near, and draw my sharp sword from my thigh,
And pierce his chest, just where the midriff holds
The liver, feeling for the spot to strike ;
But second thoughts restrained me, for right there
We too had plunged to death ; because our hands
Had not the strength to shove from the tall door
The ponderous stone he set against it. So
We waited moaning for the flush of Dawn.

‘ But when the early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, then he relit the fire, and milked
His goodly flocks all in due turn, and set
Her young beneath each ewe. Then when he had
Finished his busy work, once more he clutched
Two men at once, and got his breakfast ready.
And having fed, he drove his fat flocks forth
Moving the big stone lightly, though he set it
Back in its place again, as one might fit
A lid upon a quiver. Then he turned
His fat flocks to the mountains, whistling loud.
But I was left behind devising evil
Deep in my heart, if anywise I might
Take vengeance, and Athene grant me glory.

‘ Now to my mind seemed this the best device.
Beside a pen there lay the Cyclops’ club
A huge one, of green olive ; he had cut it
To walk with, when it should be dry. And we
Beholding it, compared it to the mast
Of a black ship of twenty oars for size,
Some portly freighter crossing the great gulf ;
So long it was, so thick to look upon.
To this I came and cut off as it were
A fathom’s length and gave it to my men
And bade them fine it down : they made it smooth,
And I stood by and sharpened it ; and next

I took and hardened it in the bright fire ;
And then I hid it carefully away
Under the dung which lay about the cave
In heaps : and told my comrades to cast lots
Among them, which should brave the risk with me,
To lift the beam and grind it in his eye,
When sweet sleep came on him. Now the lot fell
On those whom I myself would fain have picked ,
Four men, and I was numbered as the fifth.

‘ At evening then he came, herding his flocks
Of goodly fleece. Into the cave he drove
His fatlings, one and all, and left outside
None in the court ; or of his own presage,
Or as some god directed. Then he lifted
And set the great stone in its place again,
And sate and milked his sheep and bleating goats
In order, and to each ewe set her young.
And when he had finished all his busy work,
Again he seized two men, and got his supper.
Then near, I drew holding an ivy bowl
Of the dark wine, and to the Cyclops said :

“ Take and drink wine, O Cyclops, now that thou
Hast eaten of man’s meat, and know what kind
Of drink was this our galley stowed : for I
Was bringing thee drink-offering in the hope
That thou wouldst pity me and send me home ;
But thy mad rage is past endurance. Monster,
How can another of all men that be
Ever again come nigh thee, seeing that
Thy deeds are so unrighteous ? ”

‘ At that he took the cup and emptied it,
And tasting the sweet drink was wildly pleased,
And asked me for it yet a second time :

“ Give me again, of thy good-will : and say
What is thy name at once, that I may give thee

A stranger's gift whereat thou mayst be glad.
'Tis true, among my folk grain-giving earth
Bears mighty clusters of the grape, and Zeus
Sends rain to give them increase but this is
A rill of nectar and ambrosia "

' At that I gave him the bright wine again,
Nay, thrice I brought and gave it him, and thrice
He drank it up, the fool. Howbeit when
The wine had run around the Cyclops' wits,
I said to him at last persuasively :

' "Cyclops, thou askest me my famous name.
Well, I will tell thee, and do thou grant me
A stranger's gift, as thou hast promised me.
My name is Noman. Noman I am called
By those who got me, and by all my men."

' So said I, and anon he answered me
Out of his iron heart : " Noman will I
Eat last among his company, and all
The rest before him " that shall be thy gift."

' He spake, and reeled and fell upon his back ;
And there he lay, with his gross neck awry,
And sleep that conquers all laid hold of him.
And from his gullet came forth wine and bits
Of human flesh, and in his drunken stupor
He vomited. Then, then I thrust the stake
In the deep ashes till it should grow hot,
And heartened all my men with cheering words,
That no one out of fright should flinch from me ;
And when the bar of olive presently,
Green though it was, was ready to catch fire
And had a horrid glow, then I came near
And drew it from the fire. My men stood by,
And some god breathed great courage into us.
They took the sharpened stake of olive wood
And rammed it in his eye, and from above

I pressed and twirled it round. As when a man
Bores a ship's timber with a drill, which those
Below keep spinning with a strap of hide
Held at each end, while still the drill runs on,
So in his eye we held and twirled the stake
Pointed with fire, and round the red-hot thing
Ran out the blood. His eyelids and his brows
Were all singed round with burning, as the eyeball
Burned out until its roots cracked in the flame.
And as a smith dips a great axe or adze
To temper it, loud-hissing, in cold water
(For thence it is the iron gets its strength)
So hissed his eye-ball round the olive stake.
Then horribly he screamed till the rock rang,
And back we shrank in terror, while he pulled
The stake all foul with blood out of his eye
And flung it from him, writhing with his hands.
Then loud he called on the Cyclôpes, who
Dwelt round in caves along the windy heights ;
And at his cry from every side they thronged,
And asked what ailed him, gathering round the cave :
 ' "What hath distressed thee, Polyphemus, so,
That thus thou criest through the immortal night,
Making us sleepless? Can it be some mortal
Is driving off thy flocks, in spite of thee
Or slaying thee thyself by guile or force ? "
 ' Then said strong Polyphemus from the cave :
 " Friends, Noman is it that is killing me
By guile, and not by force."
 ' And they replied to him with wingéd words .
 " If no man then is doing violence
To thee there all alone, thou canst not hope
To 'scape a sickness sent by mighty Zeus.
No, pray thou to our father, king Poseidon."

 ' With that away they went ; and my heart laughed

That the smart trick I played them with my name
Had so misled them. But the Cyclops, groaning
And travailing in pain, groped with his hands
And pulled away the door-stone, and himself
Sate at the door with both hands out, to catch
Whoever tried to slip out with the sheep
Apparently he hoped I was a fool !

But I thought hard—" what is the very best
To do ? If only I can find some way
To save my comrades and myself from death ! "
All kinds of counsels and of craft I wove
As will a man for life ; for mighty harm
Was nigh ; and this plan seemed to me the best.

' There were the rams—well-fed and thick of fleece,
Fine beasts and large, with violet-dark wool ;
Them very quietly I lashed together
With twisted withes whereon that lawless monster,
The Cyclops, used to sleep. Three at a time
I took : now of the three, each middle ram
Would bear a man, while those on either flank
Would screen him as they walked. Every three sheep
Thus bore their man. But as for me—one ram
There was, by far the best of all the flock ;
Him by the back I seized, and curled below
His woolly paunch, and face upturned lay there,
Twisting my hands into his wondrous fleece,
And clung with steadfast heart. So for the time
Moaning we waited for the flush of dawn.

' As soon as early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, then all the rams dashed out to graze,
While round the pens bleated the ewes unmilked,
Their udders tight to bursting. Now their master
Worn with great torment, felt along the backs
Of all the sheep as they stood up before him,
But lacked the wit to guess how 'neath the breasts

Of his fine fleecy sheep my men were lashed.
Rearguard of all the flock, stalked out the ram
Cumbered with wool and with my cunning self :
And handling him strong Polyphemus said :

“ “ Old ram, why is it, pray, thou art the last
Of all the flock to leave the cave ? Of old
Thou wert not wont to lag behind the sheep,
But with thy bounding stride wert far the first
To graze upon the soft bloom of the grass,
The first to gain the river streams, the first
To hurry home to fold at eventide ;
But now art last of all ! Thou mournest surely
For thy lord's eye, which a bad man put out,
He and his scurvy fellows, when he had
Made weak my wits with wine, I mean Noman,
Who has not yet, I say, escaped perdition.
O, couldst thou feel as I do, and become
Articulate to tell me where he skulks
Shunning my wrath, then would I batter him,
And dash his brains out broadcast on the floor !
So should my heart be lightened of the ills
Which good-for-nothing Noman hath brought me.”

‘ So saying he sent forth from him the ram.
Now having gone a space from cave and court,
First I unloosed myself from 'neath the ram,
And then I freed my men. Quick we drove on
That herd of long-legs, rich in fat, and often
Turned to look round, until we reached the ship.
And to our mates glad was the sight of us
Who had escaped from death, and for the others
They would have moaned and wailed ; but I forbade
And with a frown I checked them, and gave orders
To throw the mob of fleecy sheep on board,
And sail the salt sea water. They made haste
Aboard and manned the thwarts, and sitting well

In order smote the grey sea with their oars .
And being gone as far as shouts would carry
I called unto the Cyclops, mocking him :

“ So, Cyclops, 'twas no coward's company
That thou wert going to eat by brutal force
Within thy hollow cave ! Thine evil deeds
Were fated to come home to thee full tale,
Thou cruel wretch, that hadst no shame to eat
The guests beneath thy roof : wherefore hath Zeus
And all the other gods requited thee.”

‘ So said I, and the more enraged at heart
He grew, and snapped the top off a great hill,
And heaved it at us, and it plunged in front
Of my blue-headed ship, and 'neath the splash
Surged up the sea. The back-wash like a flood
Bore back the ship and drave her to the shore ;
But I caught up a long pole in my hands
And thrust her side-ways. With a nod I urged
My men, and bade them bend them to their oars
To 'scape the danger . so they bent and rowed.
And having now put twice the space of water
Between us, then once more was I about
To haul the Cyclops, but my comrades stayed me,
First one and then another, with soft words :

“ Mad fool, why want to rouse a savage man,
Who but now cast his missile in the deep
And drave our ship back to the land ? Why, we
Thought we had perished there ! If he had heard
The slightest speech or sound from one of us,
He would have heaved a jagged rock and smashed
Our timbers, and our heads : so strong he throws.”

‘ But all they said could not dissuade my pride,
And in my wrath I called to him again :
“ Cyclops, if any man of mortal men
Shall ask thee of thy blind deformity,

Say that it was Odysseus made thee blind,
Sacker of fortresses, Laertes' son,
Who dwells in Ithaca".

' So said I, and he answered with a groan :
" Lo now, in very truth the oracles
Of old have found me out ! Here there was once
A seer, a good tall man, called Telemus,
The son of Eurymus, pre-eminent
In prophecy, who prophesied in his old age
Among the Cyclops folk : he told me that
These things should all hereafter be fulfilled,
And I be blinded at Odysseus' hands.
But I was looking always for some tall
Fine man, clad in great strength, to come this way ;
And now a puny worthless weakling fellow
Hath robbed me of mine eye, when he had made me
Undone with wine ! But come thou here, Odysseus,
That I may set before thee gifts of friendship,
And speed thy sending, that the great Earth-shaker
May grant it thee, seeing I am his son
And he avows his fatherhood. And he
Will heal me, if it is his will ; but none
Beside, of blesséd gods, or mortal men."

' So spake he, and I answered him and said :
" Would that I were as sure of strength to rob thee
Of life and soul and send thee on thy way
To Hades' house, as I am sure that even
The lord of earthquake will not heal thine eye."

' So said I, and he prayed to king Poseidon,
Stretching his hands out to the starry heaven :
" Hear me, Poseidon, who dost girdle earth,
Thou dark-haired lord ! if I am thy true son,
And thou avowest thee my father, grant
This man may never reach his home— Odysseus,
Sacker of fortresses, Laertes' son,

Who dwells in Ithaca. Yet if he is
Ordaigned to see his friends again and reach
His well-built house and mother country, then
Late let him come, in evil case, alone,
His comrades lost, upon a stranger ship ;
And in his household find calamities."

' So spake he praying, and the dark-haired god
Gave hearing. But again the Cyclops raised
A stone on high far greater than the first ;
And swung and hurled it, putting in his throw
Immeasurable strength. A span behind
My blue-prowed ship he slung it and just missed
The rudder-tip. And with its splash the sea
Surged up, whereof the wash bore on the ship
And drove her nearer to the further shore.

' But when we reached the island, where the rest
Of our stout ships were lying all together,
Our comrades seated round about them grieving,
And watching for us still, on making land
We beached our ship upon the sands and stepped
Ourselves out on the shore. And then we took
The Cyclops' sheep out of the hollow ship,
And shared them, that so far as in me lay
No man should go without his equal share ;
Only the ram my armoured fellows chose,
When they made distribution of the flock,
As special gift for me : and on the beach
I offered him to Zeus, the son of Cronos,
God of the thunder-cloud and lord of all ;
And burned the thigh-pieces. But he misprised
My offering, and was planning to destroy
All my stout ships and all my trusty men.

' So all day long till set of sun we sate
Feasting on meat abundant and sweet wine,
And when the sun set and the dark came on,

Then we lay down to sleep upon the shore.
But when the early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, I roused my men and bade them go
Aboard and loose the moorings. Swift they went
Aboard, and manned the thwarts and sitting well
In order smote the grey sea with their oars.
So we sailed onward, sorrowful at heart,
Glad at escape from death, but having lost
Our dear companions.'

BOOK X

‘ Then to the isle Æolian we came,
The home of Æolus Hippotades,
Dear to the deathless gods, a floating isle ;
And all about it is a wall of bronze
Unbreakable , and sheer the cliff runs up.
He hath twelve children also in his halls,
Six daughters and six lusty sons ; and he
Gave his own daughters to his sons to wife.
And evermore they feast by their dear father
And kindly mother, and before them lies
Boundless good cheer. The house is full of savour,
And noise of feasting fills its outer court
By day : and by their faithful wives at night
They sleep on corded beds with coverlets.
Theirs was the city and the goodly house
Whereto we came ; and for a full month’s space
He welcomed me, and asked me all my story—
Troy and the Argive ships and the return
Of the Achæans. So I told him all
The tale in order. But when I in turn
Sought to depart, and bade him send me on,
He too denied me nothing, but made ready
My convoy. And a sack of hide he gave me,
Skinned from a nine-year ox, wherein he had bound
The paths of all the blustering winds, because
Cronion made him keeper of the winds,
To still or stir whatever one he would.
And in my hollow ship he lashed it down
With a bright cord of silver, that not even
The faintest air should ’scape : but for my help

He sent the breath of Zephyr forth to blow
To bring our ships and us upon our way.
And yet he was not to accomplish this,
But we were ruined through our own unwisdom.

‘ Now for nine days continually we sailed
Both day and night, and on the tenth appeared
Our native land, and we had come so near
That we could see men tending beacon-fires,
When sweet sleep fell on me for weariness ;
For all the time I kept the sheet in hand
Nor gave it any of my men, that so
We might the sooner make our native land.
But my men talked among themselves, and said
That I was bringing gold and silver home,
The gifts of Æolus, great-hearted son
Of Hippotas ; and looking to his neighbour
Would one of them say thus :

‘ “ Why, how this man is loved and praised of all men,
No matter to what town or land he fares !
Much goodly treasure is he carrying back
Out of the loot of Troy : while we, who have
Accomplished the same road, are coming home
With empty hands ! And now hath Æolus
Made him these gifts out of his generous love :
Nay come, and let us see quickly what they are,
And how much gold and silver is in the sack.”

‘ So said they, and my comrades’ evil counsel
Prevailed. They loosed the sack, and all the winds
Leapt out ; and instantly the hurricane
Seized on my men and swept them shrieking loud,
Right out to sea, far from their native land.
But as for me—I woke, and held communion
With my great heart ; whether to throw myself
O’erboard and perish in the sea, or suffer
In silence, and abide ’mid living men.

Well, I endured and bided ; and I muffled
My face and lay down in the ship . but backward
My ships were borne by an ill blast of winds
To the Æolian isle , and my men groaned.

‘ There on the shore we stepped, and took in water ;
And presently my comrades made their meal
By the swift ships. And then when we had tasted
Of food and drink, I took, to go with me,
One herald and one mate, and went my way
To Æolus’ fine palace. Him I found
With wife and children feasting. In we went
And sate down by the door-posts on the threshold,
And they were all amazed, and questioned us :

“ How art thou come, Odysseus ? what fell power
Hath hurt thee ? in good truth we sent thee forth
With all solicitude, that thou shouldst reach
Thy house and home, and whatso place thou wouldst.”

‘ So said they, and I sadly spake with them :
“ My evil company have been my ruin,
Ay, they and cruel slumber. But, my friends,
Heal ye my hurt, for in you is the power.”

‘ In touching words so I entreated them,
But they were silent ; then the old man answered :
“ Get from this isle at once, thou guiltiest
Of living things ! In no wise may I help
Or speed a man whom the good gods abhor !
Go ! for thou comest with their curse upon thee.”

‘ With that he drave me groaning heavily
Out of his house. And onward thence we sailed
Stricken at heart ; and my men’s spirit was worn
By rowing hard in our vain effort, since
No more was there a sign of favouring wind.
So for six days continually we sailed
Both night and day ; and on the seventh we came
To Læstrygonian Telepylus,

Lamus' steep fortress ; where a shepherd driving
His flock home hails his fellow going forth,
And he replies. A man who never slept
Could earn a double wage there, one in charge
Of cattle and another pasturing •
White sheep, for close together are the tracks
Of night and daytime. Thither when we came
To the fair haven, where about there runs
On either side unbroken a high scarp,
And at its mouth facing each other stretch
Two jutting cliffs and make the entrance strait ;
Then all the others steered their curved ships in,
And they were moored inside the hollow haven
Close-packed, for in it never swelled a wave,
Little or big, but bright calm lay on all.
But I alone moored my black ship outside
At the land's end, and roped her to a rock ;
And climbed and stood upon a craggy hill,
A look-out place ; and there appeared no sign
Of men's or cattle's labour ; only smoke
We saw up-curling from the land. So then
Some of my crew I sent to go and learn
What kind of men were these who lived by bread
On earth. Two men I picked and with them sent
A third as herald. And being gone ashore
They followed a smooth road, whereby the carts
Were wont to bring down fire-wood to the city
From the high hills. Outside the town they met
A damsel drawing water, the tall daughter
Of Læstrygonian Antiphates.
To the fair-flowing spring Artacia,
Whence people carried water to the city,
She had come down. So up to her they went,
And spake and asked her who was king of the land
And over whom he ruled : and she at once

Showed them the high-roofed dwelling of her father.
Now when they stepped within the noble house,
Therein they found his wife, as huge of bulk
As a hill-top, and were appalled at her :
And she forthwith called from the meeting-place
Renowned Antiphates, her mate, who planned
A ghastly death for them. Straightway he seized
One of my men, and made his breakfast ready.
The other two sprang up and fled to the ships ,
Thereon he raised the war-cry through the city,
And at the sound from this side and from that
The mighty Læstrygomans came thronging
Past number, not like men but like the Giants.
With boulders heavy as a man could carry
They stoned us from the cliffs, and through the fleet
Arose a dismal din of dying men
And shattered ships withal ; and spearing them
Like fishes, they bore off their loathsome feast.
Now while they went on killing those inside
The harbour deep, my keen sword from my side
I pulled, and with it cut the ropes that moored
My blue-prowed ship, and called on my men quick
To dig their oars in, that we might escape
Our evil case. They all tore up the brine
In fear of death ; and from the beetling rocks
My ship shot gladly out to sea ; but all
Those other ships were lost there in a pack.

‘Thence we sailed onward, sorrowful at heart,
Glad at escape from death, but having lost
Our dear companions. Then we reached the isle
Æëan, where the fair-haired Circe dwelt,
An awful goddess, using human speech,
Own sister to Æetes, that dark mind ;
And Helios who gives light to mortal men
Begot them both, and Perse was their mother,

Daughter of Ocean. There we came to shore
In silence, in a road where ships could ride,
And some god guided us. And landing there
Two days and nights we lay, eating our hearts
For weariness and woes. But when at last
The fair-haired Dawn accomplished the third day,
Then I picked up my spear and my keen sword
And left the ship and hastened to a height
To look around, in hopes to see the works
Of men, or hear them speaking. So I climbed
And stood upon a rugged look-out place,
And from the wide-wayed earth I saw the smoke
In Circe's halls ascending, through a screen
Of bush and timber. In my mind and heart
I wondered whether I should go and find
The smoke and flame I had seen : but as I thought
This seemed the better plan, first to return
To the swift ship and shore, and give my men
A meal, and then despatch them to explore.

' Now on my way when I had nearly reached
My shapely ship, one of the gods took pity
Upon me in my loneliness, and sent
A mighty antlered stag right in my path.
He had been browsing in the wood, and now
Was coming down to water for a drink
Because he felt the strong sun hot on him :
As out he came I smote him on the spine
In the mid back, and the bronze spear went through
And out, and sobbing in the dust he fell,
And life sped from him. Then I set my foot
On him and pulled the bronze spear from the wound
And laid it there on earth, and let it lie ;
Then breaking twigs and withes I wove a rope
A fathom long, well-twined from end to end,
And tied the feet of the huge beast together,

And with him on my back I went my way
To the black ship, leaning upon my spear ;
Because in no wise could I hold him up
With one hand on my shoulder, for he was
A very huge great beast. I dropped him down
Before the ship, and heartened up my men
With gentle words, standing by each in turn :

“ Friends, for not yet, for all our woes, shall we
Go down to Hades’ house, before the day
Of fate comes on us ; while we have meat and drink
In our swift ship, let us bethink ourselves
Of food, so that we be not starved with hunger.”

‘ I spake : and swift they hearkened to my words,
And pulled away the mantles from their faces,
And by the marge of the unresting sea
Stared at the stag : a huge great beast he was.
But when their eyes were sated with the sight
They washed their hands, and cooked a noble feast ;
So all day long till sun-down there we sate,
Feasting on meat abundant and sweet wine,
But when the sun set and the dark came on,
Then down we lay to sleep upon the shore,
And when the early, rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, I massed my men and spoke among them :

“ Hear what I say, my comrades, though ye be
In evil case. See, friends, we know not where
The darkness is, nor dawn, nor where the sun
That giveth light to men goes underground
Nor where he rises ; wherefore take we thought
At once, if any plan be left ; for me
Myself, I know of none. For, when I climbed
A rugged look-out place, I saw the island
Ringed with a circle of unending sea,
And low it lies : and in the midst mine eyes
Through a thick screen of wood and bush, saw smoke.”

‘ So said I, and their heart was broken in them
As they bethought them of the cruel deeds
Of Læstrygonian Antiphates,
And of the might of that proud cannibal
The Cyclops. And aloud they wailed, and fast
They wept ; but of their mourning no good came.

‘ Then I told off my armoured men in two
Detachments, and to each assigned a leader ;
Of one I took command, and of the other
Godlike Eurylochus ; and we shook lots
At once in a brass helmet, and the lot
Of proud Eurylochus leapt out. So he
Set forth, and with him two and twenty men
A-weeping went, and left us to lament
Behind. Now in the forest glades they found
The house of Circe built of polished stone,
With a wide outlook ; and all round about
Were mountain wolves and lions, which she herself
Had charmed with the bad drugs she gave them : yet
They sprang not at my men, but pranced about
And fawned, their long tails wagging. As when dogs
Fawn on their master coming from a feast,
Because he always brings them bits of food
To soothe their temper, so around them fawned
The strong-clawed wolves and lions. But my men
Were frightened when they saw the fearsome brutes,
And in the fair-haired goddess’ gate they stood,
And heard the winning voice of Circe, singing
Inside, as to and fro she went in front
Of her great deathless web, a work like that
Of goddesses, so fine, so fair and bright.
And first Polites was to speak with them,
Masterful man, my dearest, truest mate :

‘ “ Friends, there is one within who plies her web
And sings so sweet that all the floor makes echo :

Goddess or woman, come and call her quick."

' So said he, and they cried aloud and called :
And quickly she came out and opened wide
The shining doors and bade them in, and all
Followed her in, the fools. Eurylochus
Remained behind, because he smelt a trap.
She brought them in and seated them on chairs
And settles, and prepared for them a mess
Of cheese and barley meal and yellow honey
With Pramnian wine, and in the food she mixed
Dark drugs, to make them utterly forget
Their native land. Now when she gave it them
And they had drunk, she rapped them with her rod
At once, and fell to penning them in styes :
And so they had the heads and voice and bristles
And shape of pigs, but even as before
Their minds abode unchanged. Thus were they penned
There crying, and before them Circe tossed
Acorns and mast and cornel fruit for food,
Such things as wallowing pigs are wont to eat.

' But to the swift black ship Eurylochus
Came hurrying back, to tell the news about
His mates, and their untimely fate. He could not,
For all his keenness, speak one single word,
So was he stricken to the heart with grief ;
His eyes were full of tears and all his thoughts
Were of lament. But when in our amazement
We all examined him, at last he told
The fate of the remainder of his troop.

" We went, as thou commandedst, through the
Noble Odysseus, and we found amidst [thickets,
The forest glades a noble dwelling built
Of polished stone, and with a wide look-out ;
And there was some one going to and fro
By a great web, and singing with clear voice,

Goddess or woman ; and they called aloud
To her, and forth at once she came and threw
The bright doors open, and she bade them in,
And they went with her in their folly : but
I stayed behind, because I smelt a trap.
So one and all they vanished, nor did any
Appear again, though long I sate and watched."

' So said he, and I threw around my shoulders
My silver-studded sword, a great bronze blade,
And slung my bow, and bade him lead me back
By the same way he came. But with both hands
He seized me, and besought me by my knees,
And wailing spoke to me in wingéd words :

' "Lead me not thither, fosterling of Zeus,
Against my will, but leave me here ; I know
That thou wilt not come back thyself, nor bring
One man of all thy company ! No, no !
Let us flee with speed, with these that still are here,
For we may yet escape the evil day."

' So said he, and I answered him and said :
"Eurylochus, for thy part stay thou here,
Here in this spot, by the black hollow ship,
Eating and drinking ; but for me, I go,
For strong necessity is laid on me."

' With that, I walked up from the ship and sea,
And passed the sacred glades and nigh was come
To the great house of Circe, sorceress ;
When as I went toward the homestead, lo,
There met me Hermes of the golden wand,
In likeness of a stripling, with the down
Upon his lip, just at the age when youth
Appears most gracious ; and he took my hand
And spake, and said to me :

' "Whither again, O luckless, roamest thou
The wolds alone, unknowing of the country ?

Lo, there in Circe's house thy men are penned
Like pigs in close-shut styes. And art thou come
To free them? Nay, I tell thee, thou thyself
Shalt not return, but stay there with the others
But see, I will redeem thee from the peril
And save thee. Take thou this good herb, and go
To Circe's house : 'twill keep the evil day
Off from thy head. And I will show thee all
The deadly arts of Circe. She will mix thee
A potion and throw drugs into thy food.
Nor even so shall she avail to witch thee,
For the good herb that I shall give thee will not
Permit of that. And I will tell thee all.
When Circe raps thee with her tapering wand,
Then do thou pull thy sharp sword from thy side
And spring at her as thou wert fain to slay her ;
And she in fear will bid thee lie with her.
'Then after that refuse thou not her bed,
That she may free thy men and succour thee :
But bid her swear by the great oath of heaven
'To plan thee no new hurt, lest when she hath
Thee stripped, she make thee weakling and unmanned.'

'So Argus-slayer said, and plucked the herb
From earth and gave it me, and made me mark
Its growth. Its root was black, but white as milk
The blossom was. As moly the gods know it,
And hard it is for mortal men to dig ;
But with the gods all things are possible.

'Thereon to high Olympus Hermes sped.
Up through the wooded isle ; but on I walked
To Circe's house and as I went, my heart
Was darkly clouded. By the doors I stood
Of the fair-headed goodess : there I paused
And shouted, and the goddess heard my voice.
She came out quick and opened the bright doors

And bade me in : and sick at heart I followed.
She led me in and placed me on a chair
With silver studs, a fine chair, richly wrought,
With a foot-stool below ; and mixed for me
A potion in a golden cup to drink;
Wherein with black intent she dropped a drug.
Now when she had given it me and I had drunk
It off, and yet was not bewitched by it,
She rapped me with her rod, and spake and said :
“ Now get thee to the styē : be off to bed
With all thy mates.” But as she spake I drew
My sharp sword from my side, and sprang at her
As I were mad to kill her, and she shrieked
Aloud, and ran in under, and embraced
My knees, and wailing spake with wingéd words :
“ Who art thou of the sons of men, and whence ?
Where are thy home and parents ? Wonderment
Takes me, to see how thou hast drunk this charm
And art not witchèd ! For there is no man else,
Not one, that hath withstood this drug, when he
Has drunk it and it once goes past his lips.
But thou, it seems, within thee hast a mind
Proof against charms. Surely thou art Odysseus
The mighty traveller, who Argus-slayer
Of the gold wand was always telling me
Would hither come in his black, speedy ship
Upon his way from Troy. Nay, but put up
Thy sword into its sheath, and then let us
Go up unto my bed, that met together
In love we may put trust in one another.”

‘ So said she, but I answered her and said :
“ How canst thou, Circe, bid me use thee gently,
Thou, who hast turned my fellows into swine
Within thy halls, and now dost hold me here
With crafty mind, and bid me to thy room,

Ay, to thy bed, that when thou hast me stripped,
Thou mayest make me weakling and unmanned ?
No, no, not I ! I have no mind to share
Thy bed, O goddess, till thou first consent
To swear a mighty oath that thou wilt not
Devise new mischief for me to my hurt."

' So said I, and she swore as I required
Forthwith, to hurt me not : and when she had sworn
And made an end of swearing, then at last
I went up into Circe's gracious bed.

' Now meantime in her halls her maids were busy ;
Four maids, who do the service of her house ;
And they are children of the wells and woods
And sacred streams that flow forth to the sea.
One of her maids was spreading o'er the chairs
Fine purple rugs above and under them
A linen cover ; while another drew
Tables of silver up beside the seats
And set on them gold baskets ; and the third
Mixed in a silver bowl the honeyed wine
Most sweet, and served out golden cups ; the fourth
Brought water, and then kindled a big fire
Beneath a mighty cauldron, and the water
Grew hot, and when it boiled in the bright bronze,
She set me in a bath and tempering it
To comfortable warmth, she bathed me with it
From the great cauldron, pouring water down
My head and shoulders, till she took away
Heart-breaking weariness from all my limbs.
But when she had bathed and had anointed me
With olive oil, a goodly cloak and tunic
She wrapt around me, and then brought me in,
And placed me on a silver-studded chair,
A fine, rich chair, with a foot-stool beneath.
Then a maid brought me water for my hands,

And poured it from a fair gold jug for washing
Above a silver basin, and drew up
Near me a polished board ; and a grave dame
Brought and set bread and added many dainties,
Providing generously of what she had,
And bade me eat. But my heart liked it not :
With other thoughts I sate, and boded evil.

‘ Now Circe, when she saw that thus I sate
And did not put my hands forth to the food,
But was oppressed with heavy sorrow, came
Near by, and spoke to me with wingéd words :

‘ “ Why sittest thus, Odysseus, like the dumb,
Eating thy heart out, but not touching food
Nor drink ? dost thou suspect some new deceit ?
Thou hast no need to fear : I have already
Sworn thee a strong oath not to do thee harm.”

‘ So said she ; but I answered her and said :
“ O Circe, what right-minded man could ever
Endure to taste of meat and drink, before
He had redeemed his men, and had beheld them
With his own eyes ? But if in kindness
Thou bidst me eat and drink, then let them go,
That mine eyes may behold my trusty friends.”

‘ At that, out through the hall with wand in hand
Went Circe, and she opened the styed-doors
And drove them out like swine of nine years old :
And there they stood before her, and she went
Among them, and anointed each of them
With a new charm : and from their limbs fell off
The bristles, which the deadly drug had made
Grow on them, that the lady Circe gave them :
And they were men once more, and younger than
They were before and goodlier far and taller
To see : and they all knew me, and each man
Clung to my hands, and o’er them all there came

Passionate sobbing, till the house around
Resounded strangely. Even the goddess herself
Was moved to pity : and she stood near by,
That queenly goddess, and said thus to me :

“ Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, to the sea-shore now
And thy swift ship ; begone ! and first of all
Drag up thy ship on land and stow thy goods
And all the gear in caves, and then return
Thyself and bring thy trusty comrades with thee.”

‘ So said she, and my lordly soul assented.
To the swift ship and the sea-shore I made
My way, and there my trusty friends I found
By the swift ship, lamenting piteously,
Shedding big tears. And just like farmstead calves
About the droves of cattle coming back
‘To yard when they have had their fill of grazing—
With one accord they frisk in front of them ;
The fences cannot hold them any longer,
But round their dams they run with ceaseless lowing—
So those men, when their eyes beheld me, flocked
Around me weeping : to their soul it seemed
As though they had come to their own land, indeed
To that same city of rough Ithaca,
Where they were bred and born : and with a wail
They spake in wingéd words to me, and said :

“ O fosterling of Zeus, at thy return
We are as glad as if we had come back
‘To Ithaca our home ! but come now, tell us
The story of our other comrades’ ruin.”

‘ So said they, but I answered with soft words :
“ See, first of all let us drag the ship ashore,
And stow our goods and all the gear in caves :
Then haste ye, one and all, to go with me
To see your mates in Circe’s sacred halls,

At meat and drink : for they have store unfailing."

' So said I, and at once to what I said
They hearkened ; but Eurylochus alone
Essayed to hold back all my men. He raised
His voice, and spake to them with wingéd words :

' " Where are we wretches going ? why are ye
So much in love with ills, as to go down
To Circe's house, for she will change us all
To pigs or wolves or lions, so that we
May willy-nilly guard her great abode ?
Just as the Cyclops served us, when our mates
Went right inside his fold, and with them went
Odysseus the fool-hardy ! For it was
Through this man's madness that they also perished."

' So said he, and at heart I pondered whether
To pull my long sword from my sturdy thigh,
And strike his head off with it to the dust
(Though very near he was of kin to me),
But with soft words my comrades held me back,
First one and then another :

' " O seed of Zeus, if so thou biddest, let us
Leave this man here behind beside the ship
To guard the ship, but as for us, do thou
Conduct us to the sacred house of Circe."

' With that they went up from the ship and sea ;
Nor was Eurylochus left by the hull ;
He followed, for he feared my grim rebuke.

' Within her house meantime in kindly wise
Had Circe bathed and rubbed with oliye oil
And clad my other men in woolly cloaks
And tunics ; and we found them all within
Feasting in state. But when they saw and knew
Each other face to face, they wept and wailed
Till the house rang around : but near she came,
That radiant goddess, and to me she said :

“ Set up no more this strong lament : I know
Myself of all the pangs ye have endured
Upon the fishy deep, and all the wrongs
That cruel men have done to you on land :
But come, eat meat and drink ye wine, until
Ye get again such spirit in your breasts
As when at first ye left your native land,
Rough Ithaca : but now are ye dried up,
And listless, thinking always of the toil
Of roving, and your heart is never merry,
Because in truth ye have been sorely tried.”

‘ So said she, and our lordly souls assented.
So there for one full year day after day
Feasting on meat abundant and sweet wine
We tarried. But when now a year had gone,
And with the waning months the seasons came
Full circle, and the long days were fulfilled,
Then my true fellows called me forth, and said :

“ High time it is to mind thee of thy home,
(Good sir, if 'tis thy portion to be saved
And reach thy lofty house and native land.”

‘ So said they, and my lordly soul assented.
So all day long till set of sun we sate
Feasting on meat abundant and sweet wine,
But when the sun set, and the dark came on,
Throughout the shadowy halls they lay and slept ;
But up to Circe's gracious bed I went,
And by her knees besought her, and she heard
My voice, and I spake wingéd words to her :

“ Make good the promise that thou madest, Circe
To send me homeward ! Now my spirit pants
To go, as do my fellows', and they waste
My heart away, lamenting round about me,
Whene'er it hap that thou art not at hand.”

‘ And the bright goddess answered me anon :

“Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, bide ye 'gainst your will
N^o longer in my house. Yet first ye must
Fulfil another road, and reach the house
Of Hades and of awful Proserpine,
To seek an answer of Teiresias' ghost,
The Theban, that blind seer, whose mind abides
Unshaken. For to him, though he is dead,
Persephone hath granted understanding,
That he alone should be enlightened, while
Like shadows flit about the other wraiths.”

‘So said she, but for me, my heart was broken :
And weeping on the bed I sate ; my spirit
Had no more wish to live and see the sunshine ;
But when I had had my fill of lamentation
And writhing, then I answered her at last .

“O Circe, who will guide us on this journey ?
For never man sailed his black ship to Hell ”

‘And the bright goddess answered me anon .
“Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, never vex thy spirit
For need of pilot to stand by thy ship !
But step the mast and spread the white sails on it
And sit thee down . the breath of the North wind
Will bear her on her way. But when thou hast
Crossed in thy ship the Ocean stream, where is
A waste shore, and the groves of Proserpine—
Willows that drop their fruit and poplars tall—
There beach thy ship by Ocean swirling deep,
But go thyself to the dank house of Hades.
There into Acheron Periphlegethon
Flows, and Cocytus, tributary stream
Of Styx's water : and there is a rock
At waters'-meet of those two roaring rivers.
There, as I bid thee, draw thou nigh, O prince,

And dig a pit, each way one cubit's length,
And round it pour to all the dead libation,
First milk and honey, secondly sweet wine,
Then water; and drop barley-meal thereon,
And earnestly entreat the strengthless heads
O' the dead, and promise, when thou comest home
To Ithaca, to offer in thy house
A barren heifer, e'en the best thou hast,
And fill the pyre with treasure, and apart
To offer to Teiresias alone
A pure black ram, the fairest of thy flock.
But when thou hast made prayer and supplication
Unto the famous nations of the dead,
Then sacrifice a ram and a black ewe,
Bending their heads toward Erebus, but thyself
Turned back, and fronting toward the flowing river.
Then many ghosts of the departed dead
Will come: and on the instant call thy men
And bid them skin and burn with fire the sheep
That lie there butchered by the ruthless sword,
And make their supplication to the gods,
To mighty Hades and dread Proserpine.
But thou, pull thou thy sharp sword from thy side
And sit there, suffering not the strengthless heads
O' the dead to venture near the blood, until
Thou hast made question of Teiresias.
Then quickly will the seer come, chief of men,
To thee, and he will tell thee of thy way,
The measures of thy path, and thy return,
And how to fare across the fishy deep."

'So said she, and anon came Dawn, gold-throned.
Then the nymph cast a cloak and tunic round me,
And she herself put on a long white robe,
Fine-wove and gracious, and about her waist
She threw a bright gold girdle, and a veil

Upon her head. But through the halls I passed
And roused my men, standing by each in turn,
With gentle words :

“Sleep ye no more, nor drowse in slumber sweet ;
But come · for lady Circe hath instructed me.”

‘So said I, and their lordly hearts assented.
Yet even thence I could not lead my men
Away undamaged. There was one, Elpenor,
The youngest, not o’er valiant in the battle,
Nor staid in sense ; he had lain down apart
From his companions in the sacred house
Of Circe, seeking the cool air as one
Oppressed with wine. Now when he heard the noise
And bustle of his comrades as they moved,
He sprang up suddenly and forgot to go
Down by the lofty stair which he had climbed,
But fell right off the roof and broke his neck,
And down to Hades’ house his spirit passed.

‘But as my men came out I spake among them :
“Ye think of course that ye are going home
To your dear land ; but Circe hath revealed
Another journey for us, to the house
Of Hades and of awful Proserpine,
To seek Teiresias, the Theban’s ghost.”

‘So said I, and their heart was broken in them :
And sitting where they were they wailed and tore
Their hair. Yet of their mourning no good came.

‘But now as we were moving to the beach
And the swift ship, in sorrow and big tears,
Meantime had Circe gone her ways and bound
By the black ship a ram and a black ewe.
She gave us easily the slip : for who
Hath eyes to see a god upon his road
This way or that, if he would not be seen ?’

BOOK XI

‘ Now when we came down to the ship and sea,
First down we dragged the ship to the bright tide,
And in the black ship set the mast and sails,
And took and put the sheep aboard and then
Ourselves embarked, in sorrow and big tears.
And that dread goddess who hath human speech,
The bright-haired Circe, sent us a fair wind
That filled the sail, a gallant travelling-mate,
Behind our blue-prowed ship. So when we had
Set all the gear in order through the ship,
We sate us down, and wind and pilot kept
Her straight, and all day long her sails were stretched
As o’er the deep she fared. Then the sun set,
And all the ways grew dark.

‘ So came she to the limits of the world,
Deep-running Ocean ; where the land and city
Of the Cimmerians are, enwrapped in mist
And cloud. And never does the shining sun
Look on them with his rays, not when he climbs
The starry sky, nor when he turns again
To earth from heaven ; but deadly night is spread
O’er miserable mortals. There we came,
And beached her and took out the sheep ; and then
Went on ourselves along the Ocean stream
Until we reached the spot which Circe spake of.

‘ There Perimedes and Eurylochus
Held fast the victims. My sharp sword I drew
And dug a pit, each way one cubit’s length,
And round it poured to all the dead libation,
First milk and honey, secondly sweet wine,

Then water, and cast barley meal thereon ;
And earnestly besought the strengthless heads
O' the dead, and vowed that when I reached my home
In Ithaca, I would offer in my house
A barren heifer, e'en the best I had,
And fill the pyre with treasure , and apart
Would offer to Teiresias alone
A pure black ram, the goodliest of my flock.
And when I had with prayers and supplications
Entreated them, the nations of the dead,
I took the sheep and cut their throats above
The pit, and the black blood ran out. And then
There gathered out of Erebus the ghosts
Of the departed dead ; unwedded youths
And brides, and old men that had suffered much,
And tender maids with hearts yet new to grief,
And many wounded by the bronze-tipped spears,
Men slain in fight with bloody harness on them.
From every side they swarmed around the pit
With eerie cries, and pale fear seized on me.
So then I called aloud to my companions,
And bade them skin and burn with fire the sheep
That lay there butchered by the ruthless sword,
And make their supplication to the gods,
To mighty Hades and dread Proserpine.
For me, I drew my sharp sword from my side
And sate there, suffering not the strengthless heads
O' the dead to venture near the blood, until
I had made question of Teiresias.

' Now the first ghost that came was of my friend
Elpenor : for not yet had he been buried
In broad-wayed earth ; for we had left his corpse
In Circe's hall, unwept and uninterred,
Because another task lay hard upon us.
At sight of him I wept and pitied him

At heart, and spake to him with wingéd words :

“ How camest thou, Elpenor, here beneath
The muck and darkness ? Thou hast made more speed
Coming afoot, than I in my black ship ”

“ So said I, and he answered with a groan :
“ An evil doom of some god was my bane,
And too much wine. When I lay down to sleep
In Circe's house, I did not think to go
To the tall ladder to come down again,
But fell right off the roof and broke my neck,
And down to Hades' house my spirit passed
Now I entreat thee, in the name of those
We left behind, who are not with us here,
Thy wife, thy father who looked after thee
When thou wert little, and Telemachus,
Whom thou hast left alone at home : because
I know that on thy way home from the house
Of Hades thou wilt stay thy well-built ship
At the Æëan isle. There then, O prince,
I charge thee, think on me . and leave me not
Unwept, unburied, when thou goest thence,
Nor turn thy back upon me, lest may be
I bring on thee the anger of the gods.
Nay, burn me with mine armour, all I have,
And heap a mound for me upon the shore
Of the grey sea, in memory of a man
Unfortunate, that even men unborn
May learn of me. Fulfil me this, and plant
Upon my tomb the oar wherewith I rowed
While I was living yet among my fellows.”

“ So said he, and I answered him and said :
“ All this, poor friend, will I perform and do.”

“ So we two sate and mournfully conversed,
I holding out my sword above the blood,
While opposite my friend's ghost said his say.

‘ Then there came up the ghost of my dead mother,
Of Anticleia, daughter of great-heart
Autolycus, whom I had left alive
When I set out for sacred Troy. I wept
To see her, and my heart was touched to pity ;
But even so, though I was keenly moved,
I would not suffer her approach the blood
Till I had question of Teiresias.

‘ Then came the ghost up of Teiresias,
The Theban, with his golden staff in hand,
And me he knew, and said : “ Laertes’ son,
Subtle Odysseus, of the seed of Zeus,
How now, unhappy man ? Why hast thou left
The sunshine, and come here to see the dead
And this unjoyous land ? Nay, but withdraw
Back from the pit, and hold off thy sharp sword,
That I may drink o’ the blood and tell thee sooth.”

‘ So said he : I gave place, and sheathed my sword
Studded with silver ; and when he had drunk
The dark blood, spake the noble seer to me :

“ Thou askest of a joyous coming home,
Noble Odysseus, but a god shall make it
Up-hill for thee. For thou wilt not, I think,
Elude the lord of earthquake, who hath stored
Rage in his heart against thee, being wroth
That thou didst blind his son. Yet even so,
Albeit in evil case, ye may win home
If thou wilt curb thy spirit and thy men’s,
As soon as thou shalt bring thy sturdy ship
Near to the isle Thrinacia, to escape
The violet-blue sea, and there find grazing
The kine and sturdy sheep of Helios,
Who oversees and overhears all things.
Leave them unhurt : remember thy return.
So may ye yet, albeit in evil case,

Reach Ithaca · but if thou harmest them
Then I foretell destruction for thy ship
And friends, and even if thou 'scape thyself,
Late shalt thou come, in evil plight, with loss
Of all thy men, upon a stranger's ship ,
And in thy house shalt find calamities—
Proud men who eat thy substance, while they court
Thy godlike wife and offer wooers' gifts.
Well, as for them, thou at thy coming shalt
Requite them for their insolences , but
When thou hast slain the suitors in thy halls
By guile, or by the sword's edge openly,
'Then go thy way, taking a shapen oar,
Until thou meet with men who do not know
'The sea, nor eat of food savoured with salt,
And naught they know of ships with scarlet cheeks,
Nor shapen oars, that are as wings to ships ·
Yea, I will tell thee a most obvious sign,
One that thou canst not miss. In that day when
Another wayfarer meeting thee shall say
Thou hast a winnowing-fan on thy stout shoulder,
'Then do thou plant thy shapely oar in earth,
And make fair sacrifice to king Poseidon—
A ram, and bull, and boar that mates with sows—
And then go home, and to the deathless gods
Who hold wide heaven, even to each in turn,
Offer thy hallowed hecatombs. But far
Off from the sea shall come to thee thy death,
Of all most gentle, which shall slay thee when
Thou art fordome with sleek old age, and rich
Shall be thy people round thee. What I say
Is sooth."

' So said he, and I answered him and said :
" Teiresias, doubtless all these threads the gods
Themselves have spun ; but come now, tell me this

And answer plainly. Here I see the ghost
Of my dead mother, and she sits in silence
Hard by the blood, nor deigns to look upon
Her own son's face, nor speak to him ! O prince,
Tell me how may she know that I am he ? ”

‘ So said I, and at once he answered me :
“ Easy it is to answer thee and make
Thee understand. Whomso thou sufferest
Of the departed dead to reach the blood,
That one will tell thee truth, but he whom thou
Deniest, surely will go back again.”

‘ With that the ghost of prince Teiresias sped
Back to the house of Hades, when he had
Told all his oracles. But there I stayed
Unmoving, till my mother came and drank
The dark blood : and she knew me then and there,
And wailing spake to me with wingéd words

“ My child, how camest thou, a man alive,
Beneath the murky darkness ? hard it is
For living eyes to see this place : between
Are mighty rivers and dread streams ; and first
Is Ocean which no man may cross on foot,
But only if one have a well-built ship.
Art thou but now come hither with thy ship
And crew in thy long wanderings from Troy,
And hast thou not been yet to Ithaca,
Nor seen thy wife at home ? ”

‘ So said she, and I answered her and said :
“ Mother o’ mine, I came—I had no choice—
Down to the house of Hades to seek out
The spirit of Teiresias the Theban.
For not yet have I neared the Achæan shore
And on my native land not yet set foot,
But aye been drifting with a load of woe,
Since first I went with goodly Agamemnon

Unto that land of horses, Ilios,
To fight the Trojans. But come, tell me this ;
Relate it plainly. In what shape on thee
Came death that layeth all men low ? and was it
Slow sickness, or did Artemis the archer
Assail and slay thee with her gentle shafts ?
And tell me of my father and my son,
Them that I left behind do they still keep
The honour that was mine, or doth already
Some other man possess it, while they say
I shall come back no more ? The wife I wedded,
Tell me of her, her purpose and her mind
Doth she bide with her son, and keep all things
Secure, or hath one wedded her already,
Whoever is the best of the Achæans ? ”

‘ Anon my honoured mother answered me .
“ Ay, sure it is, she tarries in thy house
With steadfast heart, but ever wearily
The nights and days wane for her as she weeps.
But the fair honour that was thine no man
Hath yet possessed . in peace Telemachus
Holds thy demesne, and shares the equal feasts,
Whereof ’tis fitting that a judge partake,
Since all men bid him welcome. But thy father
Abides there on the farm, nor cometh down
Unto the town, nor doth he take his rest
On rugs or bedding or bright coverlets,
But through the winter in the house he sleeps,
Where lie the slaves, in ashes by the fire,
In sorry garments clad ; but when the summer
Comes and rich autumn, all about the slope
Of his vine-plot upon the ground are strewn
His beds of fallen leaves ; and there forlorn
He lies and nurses his great grief at heart,
Longing for thy return. So too I died,

And met my doom. 'Twas not the keen-eyed huntress
That touched and slew me with her gentle shafts
At home, nor came there any sickness on me,
Such as oft draws the spirit from the limbs
With morbid wasting. But it was my longing
For thee, thy counsels and kind-heartedness,
My glorious Odysseus, that bereft me
Of honeyed life."

' So said she, and I pondered in my heart,
And fain would clasp the ghost of my dead mother ;
Three times I sprang towards her, and my heart
Bade me embrace her : from my hands three times
She flitted like a shadow or a dream :
And pain grew ever sharper at my heart
And unto her I spake with wingéd words .

' " Mother o' mine, stayest thou not for me,
Who long to clasp thee, that in Hades even
We too may cast our arms about each other .
And take our fill of chilly grief ? Is this
Only a phantom that high Proserpine
Hath sent, to make me wail and moan the more ? "

' Anon my honoured mother answered me :
" Ah me, my child, of all men most ill-fated !
In no wise doth Zeus' child, Persephone,
Delude thee ; but with mortals when they die
It happens e'en like this. No more the sinews
Hold flesh and bones together, but the might
Of the fierce fire consumes them all, as soon
As life deserts the white bones, and the soul
Flies dream-like forth and flutters to and fro.
But haste thee to the sunlight with what speed
Thou mayst, and bear thou all these things in mind,
That thou mayst tell them to thy wife hereafter."

' So talked we twain together ; and the women
Came up, impelled by high Persephone ;

All those who were in life the wives and daughters
Of princes. And they gathered in a throng
Round the black blood . and I thought how I should
Question each one, and this plan seemed the best.
I drew my long sword from my sturdy thigh,
And would not suffer them, all at one time,
To drink of the black blood so one by one
Nigh unto me they came, and each one declared
Her birth, and I made question of them all.

‘ The first I saw there was a high-born dame,
Who claimed the good Salmoneus for her sire,
And Cretheus, son of Æolus, for husband ;
Tyro. She loved Enipeus, heavenly river,
Far fairest of all streams that run on earth,
And oft would she resort to his bright waters,
But he who girdles earth, the Earthquake Lord,
Put on Enipeus’ form, and lay with her
There where the eddying river gushes forth :
And the dark wave stood o’er them, like a hill
Bent down, and hid both god and mortal woman :
And he undid her maiden zone, and shed
Upon her sleep. But when the god had done
His work of love, he put his hand in hers,
And spoke and hailed her :

“ Be glad in our love, lady ! As the year
Runs round, thou shalt give birth to splendid sons,
For commerce with the gods is no vain thing :
Them do thou tend and rear : but now go home
And hold thy peace and tell no man ; but know
I am Poseidon, shaker of the earth.”

‘ With that he plunged beneath the heaving sea :
But she conceived, and bore two sons, who both
Grew to be mighty servants of great Zeus :
And Pelias dwelt in wide Iolcus : he
Was rich in flocks, but his twin Neleus dwelt

In sandy Pylos . and yet other sons
That queen of women unto Cretheus bare,
Æson and Pheres too and Amythaon,
Lover of chariots.

‘ And after her I saw Antiope,
Asopus’ child, who boasted she had slept
In very Zeus’ embrace. Two sons she bare,
Amphion named and Zethus, who were first
To found the seat of seven-gated Thebes,
And fenced it, since in spacious Thebes unfenced
They could not dwell, though they were mighty men.

‘ And after her, Alcmene I beheld,
Amphitryon’s wife, who lay in great Zeus’ arms,
And bore brave lion-hearted Heracles ;
And Megara, haughty Creon’s daughter, whom
Amphitryon’s strong and tireless son possessed.

‘ And I saw Epicaste beautiful,
Mother of Œdipus, who did unwitting
A dreadful thing : she wedded her own son,
And he, the slayer of his own begetter,
Took her to wife ; and presently the gods
Made manifest these deeds to men. Yet he
Abode in lovely Thebes and suffered pains
Because of the dark counsels of the gods,
King over Cadmus’ people : but she went
To Hades’ house, that mighty warder’s house ;
Beset with her unhappiness, she tied
A halter to a lofty beam on high :
But many woes she left behind for him,
Yea, all a mother’s Furies bring to pass.

‘ Then lovely Chloris, whom once Neleus wedded
For her fair face, and brought her countless gifts ;
The youngest daughter of Amphion, son
Of Iasus, who once ruled mightily
There in Orchomenus of the Minyæ.

In Pylos she was queen, and brought her lord
Right noble children : Nestor, Chromius,
And princely Periclymenus, and besides
Pero, that stately girl, marvel of men.
All who dwelt near her wooed her, but to none
Would Neleus give her, save to him who should
Drive off the cows of mighty Iphicles
From Phylace, broad-fronted shambling cows,
Ill beasts to drive, a task no man essayed,
Except the blameless seer and heaven sent
An evil fate to hold him prisoner,
Hard bonds to wit, and herdsmen of the wild,
But when the months and days were done at last.
As rolled the year round and the seasons came,
Then mighty Iphicles delivered him,
When he had spoken all the oracles.
And therein was fulfilled the will of Zeus.

And I saw Leda, who had shared the bed
Of Tyndareus, to whom she bare two sons,
Two sturdy hearus, Castor the lord of horses
And Polydeuces boxer. O'er them both
Is laid the quickening earth, although they live,
And they have honour at the hands of Zeus
E'en under earth ; one day they live, and then
One day they die, alternately, and both
Have gotten worship even as the gods.

And next I saw Iphimedeia, wife
Of Alceus, who said that she had lain
With the Sea-god ; a pair of sons she bore ;
Short-lived they both were ; Otus, like a god,
And far-famed Ephialtes, and they were
The tallest men whom earth that giveth grain
E'er bred, and after glorious Orion,
By far the fairest ; for when nine years old
Nine cubits broad they were, nine fathoms high :

'Twas they who threatened to arouse the din
Of stormy war against the gods in heaven :
They strove to pile up Ossa on Olympus,
On Ossa, Pelion with his waving woods,
To make a road to heaven : and in truth
They would have done it had they reached the full
Estate of manhood, but the son of Zeus
Whom fair-haired Leto bore, destroyed them both
Before the down had bloomed below their temples
And clad their chins with a full growth of beard.

' Phædra I saw, and Procris, and the daughter
Of dark-souled Minos, Ariadne fair,
Whom Theseus once was fain to bear from Crete
To Athens' holy hill : but yet he had
No joy of her, for Artemis ere that
Slew her in Dia girdled by the sea,
Because of Dionysus' witnessings.

' And Mæra too I saw, and Clymene,
And hateful Eriphyle, who accepted
Fine gold as blood-price of her lord : but I
Could neither tell nor name all those I saw
And every one a hero's wife or daughter.
Ere that, immortal night would wane : indeed
E'en now 'tis time to sleep, whether I go
To my swift ship and crew, or tarry here :
But with the gods—and you—my convoy rests.'

So said he, and dead silence fell on all ;
A spell lay on them through the shadowy halls ;
And 'mid them first white-armed Arete spake :

' How seems this man, Phæacians, unto you
For form and stature and for poise of mind ?
My guest moreover is he, though ye all
Share in that honour ; wherefore do not be
In haste to send him forth, nor stint your gifts
To one in need so sore : for in your homes

By heaven's grace ye have much wealth laid by.'

Then 'mid them also Echeneus spake,
An ancient lord and a Phæacian elder :
' True to the mark, true to our expectation,
Friends, are the wise queen's words · so heed ye them ;
But on Alcinous here hang deed and word '

Then answered him Alcinous, and said :
' In truth this word that she hath spoke shall stand,
If I indeed am living man and king
Of the Phæacians, lovers of the oar !
But let our guest—for all his wish to go—
Natheless abide till morning, when I will
Make up the gift, full measure And his sending
Shall be a charge on all the chiefs ; but most
On me : for I am master in the land.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Alcinous, Prince, renowned o'er all the people,
If ye should bid me stay here even a year,
And then should speed me on with glorious gifts,
E'en that would I prefer ; it were far better
To come with fuller hand to mine own home ;
So should I win more love and reverence
Of all who saw me, back in Ithaca.'

Then answered him Alcinous, and said :
' Nowise, Odysseus, as we look on thee
Do we imagine thee a knave or cheat,
(And the dark earth breeds many such broad-cast,
Who fashion lies from matter into which
No man can look): but on thee is a grace
Of words and in thee is a heart of wisdom ;
And thou hast told thy tale, as might a minstrel,
With skill, to wit, the grievous woes of all
The Argives, and thine own. But come, declare me
This thing, and tell it plain. Didst thou see any
Of thy heroic comrades, who went up

With thee to Ilios and there met their fate ?
The night is long before us, endless long,
And not yet is it time to sleep in hall :
Tell on, I beg thee, of thy wondrous doings ;
I could abide e'en to bright dawn, if thou
Couldst bear to tell us here those woes of thine.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Alcinous, Prince, renowned o'er all the people,
There is a time for many words ; again
There is a time for sleep ; but, if thou wish
To listen still, I will not grudge to tell thee
Of things more piteous yet, even the woes
Of my companions who died afterwards.
From the dread war-cry of the men of 'Troy
They 'scaped with life, but on their homeward road
They perished by an evil woman's will

' Now, after holy Proserpine had scattered
This way and that the spirits of the women,
There came the ghost of Agamemnon, son
Of Atreus, sorrowing ; and round about him
Were gathered others, ghosts of all who died
With him and perished in Ægisthus' house.
And, having drunk the dark blood, instantly
He knew me, and he wept aloud and shed
Big tears and stretched his hands toward me, yearning
To touch me. But that might not be : no more
Had he remaining aught of strength or vigour,
Such as of old was in his supple limbs.

' Now seeing him I wept, and pitied him
At heart, and spoke to him with wingéd words :
" Most noble son of Atreus, Agamemnon,
Say, king of men, what stroke o'erpowered thee
Of death that lays men low ? Did the sea-god
Raise a wild blast of furious winds against thee,
And smite thee in thy ships ? Or foemen do thee

Despite ashore, when thou wert cutting off
Their cattle and fair flocks of sheep, or else
Fighting to win their city and their women ? ”

‘ So said I, and anon he answered me :

“ Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, nay, ’twas not Poseidon
Raised a wild blast of furious winds against me,
Nor smote me in my ships ; nor foemen did me
Despite ashore · but ’twas Ægisthus wrought
My death and doom, and slew me with the aid
Of my accursed wife, when he had bidden me
Unto his house and made a feast for me,
E’en as a man will slay an ox at stall.
And so I died a death most pitiful,
And round me were my comrades slain unceasing,
As tusked swine are slaughtered in the house
Of some strong, wealthy owner at a wedding,
Or else a banquet, or rich drinking-bout.
I know thou hast been present at the slaying
Of many men, in single fight or press
Of battle, but thou wouldst have felt most sorrow
If thou hadst seen that sight—how round the bowl
And loaded tables in the hall we lay,
And all the floor ran blood. But in mine ears
Most piteous rang the cry of Priam’s daughter,
Cassandra, whom the treacherous Clytemnestra
Slew at my side, while I, as I lay dying
Upon the sword, raised up my hands to smite her ;
And shamelessly she turned away, and scorned
To draw my eyelids down or close my mouth,
Though I was on the road to Hades’ house.
So, true it is, no thing can be more awful
Or shameless than a woman who lays up
Such thoughts of wickedness within her mind,
E’en as she too devised a monstrous deed ,

Her wedded husband's murder. In good truth
I thought to come home welcome to my children
And slaves ; but she in utter wickedness
Upon herself, upon all future women,
Yea, e'en on whoso doeth righteously,
Hath shed disgrace."

' So said he, and I answered him and said :
" Ah truly Zeus, whose voice is heard afar,
Hath wreaked a wondrous hatred on the race
Of Atreus from of old, through women's wills !
For Helen's sake so many of us died,
And now against thee, while thou wert afar,
Hath Clytemnestra practised treachery."

' So said I, and he answered me and said :
" Wherefore do thou likewise be never soft
E'en to thy wife : do not declare to her
All that thou hast in mind, but show her part
And let a part be hidden. Yet, Odysseus,
Not from thy wife shall come thy death on thee ;
For she is most discreet and prudent-minded,
Icarius' daughter, wise Penelope ;
Ay, a young bride we left her when we went
To war, and at her breast a baby boy :
Who now, no doubt, sits in the ranks of men
Happy, in that his father shall behold him
At his return, and he embrace his father,
As meet it is. But my wife would not let me
Content my eyes with sight of mine own son :
But slew me, me her mate, ere that. And I
Have one thing more to say ; lay it to heart.
In secret and not openly bring thou
Thy ship to shore in thine own native land :
No more there's faith in women ! But come, say,
And answer plainly—have ye haply news
Of my boy as yet living, peradventure,

In sandy Pylos or Orchomenus
Or else with Menelaus in wide Sparta ?
For not yet dead on earth is brave Orestes."

' So said he, but I answered him and said :
" Atrides, wherefore askest thou me this ?
Nowise I know if he be dead or living ;
And ill it were to speak words vain as wind.'

' So stood we twain, in converse sorrowful
Grieving together, while the big tears fell.
Then there came up the ghost of Peleus' son,
Achilles, ay, and with him other spirits,
Patroclus, and Antilochus unstained,
And Aias, who in face and form was goodliest
Of all the Greeks, save Peleus' peerless son.
And lo, the ghost of swift Æacides
Knew me, and grieving spake in wingéd words :
" Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, desperate man, how now ?
What wilder feat than this wilt thou devise ?
How durst thou come to Hades, where abide
The heedless dead, phantoms of men outworn ? "

' So said he, and I answered him and said :
" Achilles, son of Peleus, mightiest far
Of the Achæans, I am come to seek
Teiresias, if haply he would tell me
Some way of reaching craggy Ithaca :
For not yet have I neared the Achæan shore,
Nor yet set foot on mine own country, but
Am still in trouble. But for thee, Achilles,
Was never man aforetime, neither shall be,
So blesséd ; for of old when thou wert living,
We Argives gave thee honour like the gods,
And now being here thou art a mighty prince
Among the dead ; wherefore let not thy death
Grieve thee at all, Achilles."

‘So said I and he answered me at once :
“ Speak not to me of death, renowned Odysseus,
In comfortable words ! Fain would I choose,
So might I live on earth, to serve as hireling
Some other man—a landless man, a poor man—
Than be a king o’er all the dead and perished.
But give me tidings of my gallant son,
Whether or no he followed to the war
To be a leader ; and of noble Peleus,
If any news thou hast—hath he still honour
Among the host of Myrmidons, or dare
Men hold him light from Hellas unto Phthia,
Because old age has bound him hand and foot ?
For there am I no longer in the sunlight
To aid him with the strength I had, when once
I slew the army’s best in spacious Troy
And helped the Argives. Ah, could I but come
As then I was unto my father’s house
Just for an hour : then would I give good cause
To all who wrong and keep him from his honour
To rue my strength and my unconquered hands ! ”

‘ So said he, and I answered him and said :
“ Of noble Peleus naught I know indeed ;
But touching Neoptolemus, thy son,
Will tell thee all the truth as thou dost bid me :
For I myself in my good hollow ship
Brought him from Scyros to the armoured Greeks.
And oft as we took counsel around Troy town
Would he speak first, and no word missed the mark ;
Nestor the great and I alone excelled him ;
But oft as on the plain of Troy we Greeks
Battled, he would not linger in the throng
Or press of men, but, yielding in his might
To no man, he would dash out far in front ;
And many men he killed in dreadful battle.

I could not tell thee all nor name their names,
That host he slew in succouring the Greeks.
But what a man was that he put to the sword,
Telephus' son, the prince Eurypylus !
And round him of his company were slain
Many Ceteians—all for a queen's gifts.
I think he was the comeliest man I have seen
Next goodly Memnon. And again when we,
The best of the Greeks, were waiting to go down
Into the horse Epeus made, and I
Had the supreme command, whether to open
The door of our close ambush or to shut it,
Then all our other chiefs and councillors
Had tears to wipe away, and each man's knees
Shook under him ; but never once I saw
Thy son's fine face grow pale, nor saw him wipe
His cheeks. But very hard he begged of me
To let him leave the horse : and kept on handling
His sword-hilt and his heavy, bronze-tipped spear,
So keen he was to work the Trojans harm.
But after we had sacked the lofty city
Of Priam, then he went aboard his ship
Taking his share of loot, a goodly prize,
Unscathed : the sharp spear had not smitten him
Nor was he wounded in close fight, as oft
Befalls ; for Ares rages blunderingly."

' So said I, and the ghost of swift Achilles
Departed o'er the field of asphodel
With mighty strides, rejoicing in that I
Had told him of his son's preeminence.

' Then other ghosts of the departed dead
Came and stood grieving ; each of them inquired
Of those he cared for. But alone the ghost
Of Telamonian Aias stood apart,
Still wroth about the contest by the ships

Which I won o'er him for Achilles' arms,
Whose queenly mother set them for a prize :
The judges were Athene, and the sons
Of Troy. Ah, would that I had never beat him
Or won such prize ! So noble was the head
O'er which—all for those arms—the earth has closed,
E'en over Aias, who in deeds of war
And comeliness surpassed all other Greeks
Next to unmatched Pelides. So I spake
To him in soothing words :

‘ “ O Aias, son of stainless Telamon,
So e'en in death thou art not to forget
Thy wrath with me about those curséd arms,
Sent by the gods to be the Argives' bane ?
What a strong tower of theirs fell in thy fall !
And for thy death we Greeks cease not to sorrow
As for the lost Achilles, son of Peleus :
Yet is none else to blame but Zeus, who hated
The host of Danaan spearmen terribly,
And laid on thee thy doom. But come to me,
O prince, that thou mayst hear my word and speech,
And curb thine anger and thy spirit of pride.”

‘ So said I, but he gave me not a word,
And went his way to Erebus, to join
The other ghosts of the departed dead.
Yet even then, for all his wrath, would he
Have made address to me, or I to him,
But that my heart within was fain to see
The spirits of those others that were dead.

‘ Then I saw Minos there, the brilliant son
Of Zeus, a golden sceptre in his hands,
Seated and giving sentence to the dead,
And round the prince they sate or stood throughout
Hades' wide-gated house, and asked his dooms.

‘ And after him I marked Orion huge,

Driving across the field of asphodel
The wild beasts in a pack, the very beasts
That he had slain upon the lonely hills,
And in his hands he held a solid club
Of bronze, unbroken ever.

‘ And Tityus, son of glorious Earth, I saw
Lying upon the ground ; and, as he lay,
He stretched nine roods ; and, one on either side,
Two vultures sate by him and gnawed his liver,
Diving into his entrails, nor could he
Repel them with his hands ; because he had
Ravished the glorious bedfellow of Zeus,
Leto, when she was on her way to Pytho
Through Panopeus with its delightful lawns.

‘ Yea, Tantalus I saw in grievous pains,
Upstanding in a pool that lapped his chin,
And in his thirst he strained, but could not take
And drink ; for always as the old man bent him,
Mad for a drink, so often would the water
Fail as if sucked away, and round his feet
Black mud appeared ; for some god dried it up.
And o’er his head tall trees and leafy drooped
Their fruits—bright-fruited apples, pomegranates,
Pears and sweet figs and olives in their bloom—
But every time the old man reached out towards them
Endeavouring to take them in his hands,
The wind would toss them to the shadowy clouds.

‘ Ay, and I saw in torment Sisyphus
Heaving a monstrous stone with both his hands ;
Bracing himself, I say, with hands and feet,
He strove to roll the stone up to the crest,
But every time he was about to heave it
Over the top, the weight would press him back,
And down again the unrepentant boulder
Rolled to the plain ; then would he strain again

To push it up, and from his limbs the sweat
Streamed, and the dust rose upward from his head.

‘ And after him I marked strong Heracles—
Nay, but his wraith ; for he himself hath joy
Feasting among the gods who live for ever
With pretty-ankled Hebe for his wife,
‘ Great Zeus’ and golden-sandaled Hera’s daughter ;
And round him rose a clamour from the dead,
As of distracted, panic-stricken birds,
And black as night he glared about him fiercely,
Bow bared and arrow fitted to the string,
As one in act to shoot. And round his breast
An awful sword-sling hung, a golden baldric,
Whereon were fashioned most stupendous things,
Bears and wild boars and lions with fierce eyes,
Wars, battles, murders, massacres of men.
May he, whoe’er he was, who in his craft
Designed that belt, having once fashioned it,
Fashion none other ever ! And at once
When his eyes fell on me, he recognised me,
And grieving spake to me with wingéd words :
“ Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, dost thou too, poor soul,
Drag out some evil lot, such as I once
Endured beneath the daylight ? Son was I
Of Zeus Cronion, but distress unmeasured
I had, for I was bonded to a man
Far worse than me, who laid hard toils upon me ;
Yea, once he sent me here to fetch the Hound
Of Hades ; for no harder task than that
Could he devise for me. I seized the Hound
And brought him forth from Hades’ house ; for guide
Hermes I had, and gleaming-eyed Athene.”

‘ With that he went back into Hades’ house :
But still I stayed on there, to see if any

Might yet come of the hero folk, who died
In the old days. Ay, then should I have seen
Yet other ancients whom I longed to meet,
Peirithous and Theseus, splendid sons
Of gods ; but, ere that, with an eerie cry
The countless nations of the dead swarmed up,
And pale fear seized me, lest high Proserpine
Should send against me out of Hades' house
The Gorgon's head, that most appalling monster.

‘ Then I went quickly to the ship, and bade
My comrades go on board, and loose the moorings ;
And swift they boarded her and manned the thwarts :
And down the stream of Ocean was she borne
By the flood wave : at first we rowed awhile,
And then the wind fell fair.’

BOOK XII

‘ Now when our ship had left behind the stream
Of river Ocean, and had reached the wave
Of the wide sea, and that *Ææean* isle,
Where are the dwelling-place and dancing-lawns
Of early Dawn, the land of sunrises,
We came and beached our ship there on the sands,
And then stepped out upon the shore, and there
Fell sound asleep and waited for bright Dawn.

‘ As soon as early rosy-fingered Dawn
Broke, I sent forth my men to *Circe’s* house
To fetch the body of the dead *Elpenor*.
Quickly we cut wood-billets up, and there
Where juts the headland furthest out to sea,
Sadly and with big tears we buried him.
Then when the dead man and the dead man’s arms
Were burned, we piled a barrow and upon it
Hauled up a pillar, and his shapen oar
We planted on the summit of the mound.

‘ Now all this kept us busy ; but our coming
Forth from the house of *Hades* was not hidden
From *Circe*, and she soon arrayed herself
And came to us. Her handmaids brought with her
Bread and much meat and ruddy, sparkling wine ;
And the fair goddess stood there in our midst
And spake among us :

‘ “ O wilful men, who have gone down alive
To *Hades’* house, to meet death twice, when all
Men else die once ! But come, take food and drink
Your wine here all day long, and when the dawn
Breaks, ye shall sail, and I myself will show you

The road and guide you at each point, so that
Ye may not through some wretched blundering
By sea or land suffer distress or pain."

' So said she, and our lordly hearts assented.
So all day long till set of sun we sate
Feasting on meat abundant and sweet wine,
But when the sun set and the dark came on,
By the stern cables all the others rested ;
But Circe took me by the hand apart
From my companions, and she bade me sit,
And laid her down beside and asked me all.
Whereon I told her all the tale in order.

Then queenly Circe spake to me and said :

' " Thus to their end, then, have these things all come !
But do thou hearken even as I tell thee ;
A god himself shall mind thee of my words.
First to the Sirens thou shalt come, and they
Bewitch all men, whoever comes to them.
Whoso draws near in ignorance and hears
The Sirens' voice, comes never back to see
His wife and babies stand by him rejoicing ;
But with their ringing song the Sirens charm him,
As in a mead they sit, and all around
Is a great heap of bones of rotting men,
And on the bones the skin is shrivelling.
But row past them, and knead some honey-wax
And smear it on the ears of thy companions,
Lest any hear ; but if thou wish thyself
To listen, bid them lash thee hand and foot
In thy swift ship, upright in the mast-step,
And knot the rope-ends to the mast ; that so
Thou mayst delight thee, listening to the voice
Of the two Sirens ; but if thou implore
And urge thy company to set thee free,
Then let them bind thee fast with yet more bonds.

Now when thy crew have rowed the ship past these,
I will not tell thee fully on which side
Thy path shall lie ; but think it out thyself ;
And I will tell thee about either course.
Well, on one side there are beetling rocks,
Where the great wave of dark-eyed Amphitrite
Roars up ; and these, look thou, the blessed gods
Know as the Wandering Rocks. That way can pass
Not even wingéd things, not timorous doves
That bear ambrosia unto Father Zeus,
But aye the smooth rock snatches one of them,
And to make good the Father sends another.
Thereby hath never ship of man escaped
That ever came there, but the waves of the sea
And storms of baneful fire confusedly
Toss planks of ships, and bodies of their crews.
Only one ship of all that sail the seas
Hath passed thereby, the ship which all men mind,
The Argo on her passage from Æetes ;
And her the surge must instantly have dashed
On the big rocks, if Here had not sent her
Betwixt them, for the love she bore to Jason.

“ Now on the other course there are two cliffs :
One of them reaches with its razor peak
To the wide sky, and a dark cloud enfolds it,
Which never floats away, and blue sky never
Surrounds the peak in summer nor in autumn :
No mortal man could climb it nor set foot
Thereon, no, not with twenty hands and feet ;
For slippery, as if polished, is the scarp.
In that same cliff midway is a dim cave
Facing to Erebus, toward the shadow,
And thither ye must steer your galley past,
Noble Odysseus ! Never man of might
Could shoot an arrow from his hollow ship

To reach that vaulted cavern. Therein dwells
Fierce-barking Scylla ; yet her voice indeed
Is only like a new-born whelp's, but she
Herself is a fell monster, such as none
Were glad to see, though 'twere a god who met her.
Mind thee, she hath a dozen dangling feet,
And six long necks, and on each neck a head
Most hideous, with a triple row of teeth
Set close and thick, and reeking of black death.
Sunk to the waist inside the hollow cave,
She cranes her heads out from that dreadful gulf,
And there she fishes, hunting round the clift,
For dolphins or sea-dogs, or greater beasts
That haply she may catch, for myriads such
Deep-moaning Amphitrite feeds. Past her
No seamen boast that they have ever sailed
Unscathed ; for from the blue-prowed ship she plucks
And carries off with every head one man.

“ The other cliff, Odysseus, thou wilt see
Is lower (they lie close together ; thou
Couldst shoot a shaft across) and on it stands
A tall fig tree full-leaved, but under it
Immense Charybdis sucks in the black water ;
For thrice a day she spouts it forth and thrice
She sucks it horribly ; and when she sucks
Be thou not there ! For none could save thee then
From ruin, no, not e'en the earthquake-lord.
But, drawing very nigh to Scylla's rock,
Drive thy ship quickly past ; for sure it is
Far better to bewail six of thy crew
Lost, than them all together.”

‘ So said she, and I answered her and said :
“ But, goddess, pray, tell me this one thing true ;
Is there no way by which I might slip past
Malign Charybdis, and requite that other,

When she would prey upon my company ? ”

‘ To that the radiant goddess answered me .

“ What, is thy heart still set on deeds of war
And travail, wilful man ! Wilt not thou yield
E’en to the deathless gods ? She is no mortal,
But an immortal bane, dread, grievous, fierce,
Not to be fought with ; there is no defence.

The bravest way is flight from her ; for if
Thou tarriest by the rock to don thine armour,
I fear she may dart out a second time,

And reach at thee with all her heads, and seize

As many as before. Nay, row thou past

With all thy strength, and call upon Cratais,
Her dam, who bare her for a curse to mortals.

Then will she keep her from a second sally.

“ And thou shalt reach the isle Thrinacia :

There graze the numerous kine of Helios

And his stout flocks : there are seven herds of kine

And seven fair flocks of sheep, fifty in each.

They bear no young, nor ever are they minished ;

Celestial are their shepherds, fair-haired nymphs,

Lampetie and Phaëthus, whom

To Hyperion bright Neæra bore.

Their lady mother, having borne and nursed them,

Placed them far off in the Thrinacian isle

To keep their father’s flocks and shambling kine.

Leave them unhurt ; remember thy return ;

So may ye yet, albeit in evil case,

Reach Ithaca ; but if thou harmest them,

Then I foretell destruction for thy ship

And crew as well ; and even if thou shalt

Thyself escape, late and in evil plight

Shalt thou come home, with loss of all thy mates.”

‘ So said she, and anon came gold-throned Dawn.

Then the bright goddess went up through the isle ;

But I departed to the ship, and stirred
My men to go aboard and loose the moorings.
Straightway they boarded her and manned the thwarts,
And sitting well in rank began to smite
The grey sea with their oars ; and for our aid
That awful goddess who hath human speech,
The bright-haired Circe, sent us a fair wind,
That filled the sail, a gallant travelling mate,
Behind the blue-prowed ship. So having trimmed
The gear throughout the ship, we sate us down,
And wind and steersman held her on her course.

‘ Then with sad heart said I among my men :
“ Friends, ’tis not well that only one or two
Should know the oracles which Circe told me,
That goddess bright ; therefore will I declare them,
That with foreknowledge we may either die
Or haply, shunning death and fate, escape.
Now first she told us to avoid the song
Of the witch Sirens, and their mead of flowers.
Me only she bade listen to their voices .
But bind me tight with bonds that I may keep
My place unmoved, upright in the mast-step,
And tie the rope-ends to the mast itself,
And if I beg and bid you set me free,
Then do ye lash me fast with more bonds still.”

‘ Thus I rehearsed unto my company
These several things, and told them ; and meanwhile
Our sturdy ship came swiftly to the isle
Of the two Sirens, for a gentle breeze
Impelled her. Suddenly it ceased : there fell
An airless calm, and some god lulled the waves.
Then jumping up my comrades furled the sails
And stowed them in the hold, and sate at the oars,
And churned the water with their smooth pine-blades.
But taking my sharp sword I sliced to bits

A great round cake of wax, and kneaded it
In my stout hands, and soon the wax grew warm ;
For my strong grip, ay, and the Sun-king's rays
Wrought on it. And therewith I smeared the ears
Of all my men in turn ; and me they bound
Both hand and foot upright in the mast-step,
And tied the rope-ends to the mast itself ;
And they themselves sate down, and with their oars
They beat the hoary sea. Now when we were
As far away as a man's shout can carry,
Driving apace, the Sirens marked the ship
As near she rushed, and raised their clear-toned song :

“Come hither and draw nigh, renowned Odysseus,
Great glory of the Achæans ! stay thy bark,
To listen to the singing of us twain ;
For never yet hath any man rowed past
This isle in his black ship, till he hath heard
The honeyed music of our lips, and goes
His way delighted, and a wiser man.
For see, we know the whole tale of the travail
That Greeks and Trojans suffered in wide 'Troy-land
By heaven's behest ; yea, and all things we know
That come to pass upon the fruitful earth.”

‘So said they, and their voice came very sweet.
My heart was fain to listen, and with nods
And frowns I bade my comrades set me loose,
But o'er their oars they bent them and rowed on ;
And Perimedes and Eurylochus
Leapt to their feet and bound me with more bonds
And drew them tighter. But when they had passed
The Sirens and could hear their sound or song
No longer, then my trusty men pulled off
The wax which I had smeared upon their ears
And loosed me from my bonds.

‘Now when we had left that island, then full soon

I sighted smoke and a great wave, and heard
A booming ; and my men took fright : the oars
Flew from their hands, and fell all with a splash
Upon the race, and there the ship stood still,
When they no longer plied the tapering oars ;
But through the ship I went and cheered my men
With soothing words, standing by each in turn :

“ Friends, we are nowise novices in trouble,
And surely this that is upon us now
No whit is worse than when the Cyclops penned us
Inside his hollow cave by brutal force ;
Yet even thence by my resource and wit
And courage we escaped. So too one day
Shall we, I hope, remember this adventure.
But come now, let us all do as I say :
Go, man the thwarts and with your oar-blades beat
The deep surf of the sea, if haply Zeus
May suffer us to flee and shun this death ;
As for thee, steersman, this is my command,
Lay it to heart, since thou dost wield the helm
Of the light ship : Now hold her well away
Outside this smoke and surf, and hug the cliff,
Lest she fall off that way before thou knowest,
And so thou cast us to catastrophe.”

‘ At that they hastened and obeyed my words.
Yet did I not go on to speak of Scylla,
A bane without remede, lest they perchance
Might cease from rowing in a fit of panic
And huddle in the hold. And then it was
That I forgot the strait behest of Circe,
In that she bade me nowise arm myself ;
But, having donned my splendid mail and handling
A couple of long spears, forward I walked
To the prow deck, whence I expected first
That Scylla of the rock would come in sight

To devastate my comrades ; but nowhere
Could I descry her, and my eyes grew tired
Peering all round about the misty rock.

‘ Wailing our lot we sailed on up the strait.
On one side Scylla lay, and on the other
Immense Charybdis sucked in horribly
The salt sea water. When she spewed it out
All of her seethed and bubbled like a cauldron
On a great fire, and high aloft the spray
Kept falling on the tops of either cliff.
But when she swallowed in the salt sea water
Then all of her lay open in a ferment,
While round about the rock roared terribly,
And underneath the earth showed black with sand,
And pale fear seized my men. We stared at her
In terror of our lives ; but meantime Scylla
Snatched from the hollow ship six of my men
The strongest and the stoutest men I had ;
And glancing round the ship to watch my crew
There swinging in the air I saw their hands
And feet ; and they, shrieking in agony,
Kept calling me by name for the last time.
And as an angler on a headland, when
He casts his bait to lure the little fishes,
Drops down into the sea with his long rod
The horn of a stalled ox, and when he hooks one,
Flings it on shore contorted ; so were they
Pulled writhing up the cliffs, and at her doors
She ate them screaming there, and stretching out
Their hands to me in their great agony :
That was the saddest sight I ever saw
Of all the travail I endured while I
Explored the sea-ways.

‘ Now when we had escaped the rocks, and risks
Of Scylla and Charybdis, then full soon

We reached the peerless island of the god.
There were the handsome cattle, broad of brow,
And great, brave flocks of Helios Hyperion.
Then while still out at sea in my black ship
I heard the lowing oxen being stalled,
And bleating of the sheep, and on my mind
There tell the saying of Aævan Circe
And the blind Theban seer, Teiresias,
Who charged me very straitly to avoid
The isle of Helios who delights the world.

‘Then heavily I spake among my men :
“Hear me, my men, for all your evil plight,
That I may tell you how they prophesied—
Aævan Circe and Teiresias,
Who charged me very straitly to avoid
The isle of Helios who delights the world ;
For there, said they, the most terrific trouble
Awaited us. Nay, row the black ship on
And miss the island.”’

‘So said I, but their heart was broken in them,
And straight Eurylochus made fierce reply :
“Odysseus, thou art stubborn, and of strength
Beyond us, and thy limbs are never tired.
I think thou must be wholly made of iron,
That wilt not let thy men, sated with toil
And drowsiness, set foot upon the shore,
Where on the sea-girt isle we might prepare
A savoury meal once more ; but biddest us,
E’en as we are, roam on through sudden night,
Lost from this isle, across the misty deep.
The nights beget fierce winds, the bane of ships ;
And how should one escape the plunge to death
If on a sudden came a squall of wind,
The South, or roaring Zephyr, which so often
Smash up a ship in spite of the high gods ?

No, let us yield to black night for the present,
And biding by our swift ship let us cook
Our supper, and at daybreak go aboard
And put out to broad sea."

' So said Eurylochus ; my other men
Applauded him. And then in truth I knew
Some god was certainly devising evil,
And unto him I spake with wingéd words :

' " I am alone, Eurylochus, and ye
In truth constrain me ; but come, swear ye all
A mighty oath to me, that should we find
A herd of cattle or great flock of sheep,
No one of you in sinful foolishness
Will slay one cow or sheep, but quietly
Will eat the fare immortal Circe gave us."

' So said I, and they took at once the oath
Of abstinence, as I required ; and when
They had sworn and made an end of swearing, we
Moored our stout ship inside a hollow harbour
Near a sweet-water spring, and my companions
Stepped out, and skilfully made supper ready.
But when they had had their fill of meat and drink
They fell to weeping, thinking of their mates
Whom Scylla ravished from the ship and ate ;
And deep sleep came upon them as they wept.
Now when it was the third watch of the night,
And stars had swung about the pole, then Zeus
Who rolls the clouds, aroused a mighty gale
And fearful storm on us, and hid with clouds
Both land and sea ; and night tore down from heaven.
So when the early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, we beached the ship and dragged her up
Inside a hollow cavern, where the nymphs
Had their fair dancing-floors and seats. Then I
Assembled all my men and said to them :

“ Friends there is meat and drink in our swift ship ;
So from the cattle let us keep our hands,
Lest ill befall us ; for a fearful god,
The Sun-god, owns these cattle and brave sheep,
Who oversees and overhears all things ”

‘ So said I, and their lordly hearts assented.
Then one full month the South wind blew unceasing,
Nor any other wind arose except
The East and South. Now while my men still had
Corn and red wine, they did not touch the cattle,
For lain they were to live ; but when at last
The stores had all been spent out of the ship,
And now they needs must roam about to hunt
For fish or fowl, whate’er might come to hand,
Using bent hooks—for hunger gnawed their belly—
Then all alone I went up through the island
To pray the gods, if haply one of them
Would show me how to go. Now on my way
Inland, apart from all my men, I washed
My hands, where there was shelter from the wind,
And prayed to all the gods that keep Olympus ;
But on my eyes they shed refreshing sleep.
Meanwhile Eurylochus began to give
Bad counsel to my men :

“ Mates, hear my words, for all your evil case.
To wretched mortals every kind of death
Is hateful, but to die—to meet one’s fate—
By starving is most pitiful. No, come,
Let us round up the best of Helios’ cattle,
And offer sacrifice to the immortals
Who hold wide heaven ; and if we ever reach
Our homeland, Ithaca, then let us build
Forthwith a costly shrine to Hyperion
And set therein many rich offerings.
As for his straight-horned cattle, if he be

Angered at all, and wish to wreck our ship,
And all the gods go with him, well, I would
Rather lose life in one gulp at the wave,
Than slowly straitened in a desert island."

' So said he, and my other men applauded.
And then and there they rounded up the pick
Of Helios' kine, from where they were near by
(For not far off the blue-prowed ship they grazed,
The goodly shambling cattle, broad of brow)
And standing round them, to the gods they prayed,
Plucking the green leaves from a lofty oak,
For they had no white barley left on board.
Then, having prayed and cut the throats of the cows
And skinned them, they cut out the thigh-pieces
And wrapped them in a double fold of fat
And laid raw flesh thereon. No wine they had
To pour upon the blazing sacrifice,
But having offered water for libation,
They roasted all the entrails on the fire ;
And when the thigh-pieces were all consumed
And they had tasted of the inner parts,
They sliced the rest up small and spitted it.
In that same hour sweet slumber left mine eyes,
And forth I set toward the swift ship and shore ;
But on my way, as I was drawing near
The curving ship, the rich smell of the fat
Came all around me, and I groaned aloud
And cried unto the gods who live for ever :

" " O Father Zeus, and all ye blessed gods
Who live for ever, to my ruin surely
Ye laid me in a cruel slumber, while
My comrades whom I left behind imagined
A monstrous deed ! "

' Then swift to Helios Hyperion came
Long-robed Lampetie, with the news that we

Had killed his cattle ; and with angry heart
Immediately he spake among the gods :

“ ‘ O Father Zeus, and all ye blessed gods
Who live for ever, vengeance, vengeance, now
On the companions of Laertes' son,
Odysseus, who have insolently slain
My kine, which were a constant joy to me,
Whenever I went up the starry skies
Or turned from heaven to earth ! Unless they pay me
Fitting atonement for my kine, I will
Go down to Hell and shine among the dead.”

‘ But Zeus who rolls the clouds replied to him :
“ No, Helios, no ; but shine thou on amidst
The immortal gods, and mortal men on earth
That giveth grain. As for those men, I will
Soon smite their ship with my white thunderbolt,
And cleave it small amid the wine-dark sea.”
(This from Calypso the fair-haired I learned,
Who said she heard it from the herald Hermes).

‘ Now when I had come down to the ship and sea
I went up to my comrades one by one
And rated them ; but we could find no cure—
Dead were the kine already. Then the gods
Sent signs and wonders to affright my men.
The skins did crawl ; and roast and raw alike,
The meat upon the spits began to bellow,
And there were noises as of lowing kine.

‘ For six days then my trusty comrades feasted
Upon the pick of Helios' kine which they
Had rounded up. But when Zeus, son of Cronos,
Brought on the seventh day, then the winds ceased
To blow a gale ; and there and then we went
Aboard, and, having stepped the mast and raised
The shining sails, we sailed for open sea.

‘ But when we left that isle, and there appeared

No other land but only sky and sea,
'Twas then Cronion poised a pitch-black cloud
Above the hollow ship, and in its shadow
The deep was darkened. On her way the ship
Ran, but not long, for in an instant came
The howling West with a great rush of wind,
And both the forestays of the mast were snapped
By the high blast, and backward fell the mast
And all its tackle dropped into the bilge ;
Abaft, the mast crashed on the pilot's head
And smashed his skull to bits, and diver-like
Down from the deck he plunged, and his brave spirit
Quitted his bones. In that same instant Zeus
Thundered and shot his flame upon the ship,
And stricken by his thunderbolt she reeled
From stem to stern, and filled with sulphur smoke ;
And out fell all my comrades. On the waves
Round the black ship like sea-mews they were borne,
And the god reft them of their coming home.
But I kept pacing up and down the ship
Till the surge tore her side-planks from her keel,
And the wave bore her naked, and broke off
Her mast clean at the keel. Now o'er the mast
Was bound the backstay, fashioned of ox-hide,
And therewith both together, mast and keel,
I lashed, and sate upon them, and was carried
By the destroying winds.

'Then, then the West wind ceased to blow a gale,
And on its heels the South wind hurried, bringing
Grief to my soul, that so I should retrace
My way to stark Charybdis. All night long,
Was I swept on, and with the rising sun
I came to Scylla's rock and grim Charybdis.
Now as she sucked the salt sea-water down,
I made a jump, and clutched the tall fig-tree,

And clung there like a bat. I had no place
To plant my feet on firmly, nor to stand,
For far below its roots spread, and its boughs
Grew long and high in air and overshadowed
Charybdis. So I hung there steadfastly
Till she should spew forth mast and keel again ;
And to my joy they did emerge at last.
What hour a man who settles many causes
Of the young bloods who seek to him for judgment,
Arises from his court to go to supper,
That hour it was, when from Charybdis' maw
Those timbers reappeared. Then I let go
My hands and feet above, and in the midst,
Clear of the long beams, plumped into the water,
And sitting on them paddled with my hands.
But after that the Sire of gods and men
No more let Scylla see me : otherwise
I never should have 'scaped the plunge to death.

‘Thence was I borne nine days ; on the tenth night
The gods conveyed me to the Ogygian isle,
Home of fair-haired Calypso, that dread goddess
Who uses human speech. She welcomed me,
And tended me. Why should I tell thee this ?
But yesterday it was I told it thee
And thy good wife in hall : it likes me not
To tell again a tale once plainly told.’

BOOK XIII

So said he, and on all dead silence fell ;
A spell lay on them through the shadowy halls.
But then Alcinous answered him and said :

‘ Since thou art come, Odysseus, to my house
With its high roof and brazen floor, thou shalt
Reach home, I wot, and not be beaten back,
Though thou hast very grievously been tried.
But to each man among you who are wont
To drink the red wine of the elders here,
And listen to the minstrel in my halls,
I speak and charge you thus. Yon polished chest
Holds garments for the stranger packed already,
With curious gold-work and all other gifts
Which the Phæacian counsellors brought here.
But come now, let us give him each of us
A cauldron and great tripod, and in turn
Repay ourselves by levying from the people ;
For hard it were that one man should make gifts
And not be recompensed.’

So said he, and his speech was pleasing to them.
So each one to his house they went to rest.
But soon as early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, unto the ship they came in haste,
And brought the bronze that is the strength of men.
Now the strong king Alcinous went in person
Throughout the ship, and stowed the gifts with heed
Beneath the thwarts, not to impede the crew
In rowing as they laboured at the oars.
Then they departed to Alcinous’ house

And made a banquet ready.

On their behalf Alcinous the strong king
Offered a bull to Zeus, the son of Cronos,
Who dwells in the dark cloud, the lord of all.
And when they had burned the pieces of the thighs,
They shared the noble banquet, making merry ;
And in their midst Demodocus was playing,
The holy singer honoured of the people.
Yet ever would Odysseus turn his head
Toward the blazing sun, as fain to see it
Go down, for he was eager to return
And as a man longs for his supper, when
His pair of wine-dark oxen all day long
Have dragged his jointed plough through fallow land,
And gladly as he sees the sun's light sink
That he may get to supper, and his knees
Feel weary as he goes ; so welcome was
The sinking of the sunlight to Odysseus.
Then suddenly he spake to the Phæacians,
Those lovers of the oar, and most of all
Unto Alcinous he made known his word :

‘ Alcinous, Prince, renowned o’er all the people,
Pour ye drink offerings, and send me safe
Upon my way—and ye too, fare ye well !
For now hath been fulfilled all that my heart
Desired, an escort and the gifts of friendship.
And may the gods of heaven bless them to me,
And when I reach my home, there may I find
My perfect wife with those I love unharmed ;
While you, abiding here—may ye make glad
Your wedded wives and children, and the gods
Grant you prosperity of every kind,
And may no evil come among your people.’

So said he, and they all applauded him,
And gave their voice to speed the guest, since he

Had spoken right. Then strong Alcinous said
Unto the herald :

‘ Pontonous, mix a bowl and serve the wine
To all in hall, that with a prayer to Zeus
We may despatch our guest to his homeland.’

So said he ; whereupon Pontonous mixed
The honeyed wine and served to all in turn,
And they, from where they sate, poured out libation
Unto the blesséd gods who hold wide heaven.
But up rose good Odysseus, and he put
The two-armed cup into Arete’s hand
And spake and uttered wingéd words to her :

‘ Queen, fare thee well, through all the years, until
Old age and death, that visit all men, come :
For me, I go my way ; but mayest thou
Here in thy house be happy with thy children
And people and Alcinous the king.’

So saying, o’er the threshold good Odysseus
Strode, and the strong Alcinous sent a herald
To guide him to the swift ship and seashore.
With him Arete too sent women-slaves :
One with a tunic and a new-washed cloak,
And one she sent to carry the strong chest,
And yet a third bore bread and ruddy wine.

Now when they had come down to the ship and sea,
The brave youths of the escort quickly took
The things and stowed them in the hollow ship,
Ay, all the food and drink. Then they spread out
A rug and sheet of linen for Odysseus
Upon the aft-deck of the hollow ship,
That he might sleep right sound. And he too went
Aboard and laid him down in silence. Then
They manned the benches each man in his place,
And loosed the hawser from the bored-out stone.
Then soon as they leaned back and tossed the brine

With their oar-blades, upon his eyelids fell
Sound sleep and deep, most sweet, and most like death.
And as upon a plain four stallions yoked
Go springing all together 'neath the lash,
And prancing high fulfil the journey lightly,
So with the ship : so leapt her poop on high,
And the dark wave of the resounding sea
Foamed greatly in her wake ; and on her way
Surely and steadily she sped , not even
The circling hawk, swiftest of wingéd things,
Could have kept pace with her. So running lightly
She clove the sea waves, having one on board
Who was the peer of gods in counsel, one
Who had aforetime suffered many pains
At heart, in passages of mortal wars
And grievous waves ; but now he slept in peace,
Forgetting all the troubles he had suffered.

Now when the brightest star of all came up
That ever heralds the first light of dawn
Then the seafaring ship approached the island.

The land of Ithaca hath a certain harbour
Of Phorceys, old man of the sea ; and near
Its mouth jut out two headlands, sheer to seaward,
But sloping on the side toward the harbour.
These break the mighty wave that ill winds roll
Outside, and once within, the sturdy ships.
When they have reached the point of anchorage,
Ride without mooring. By the harbour's head
There grows a long-leafed olive tree, and close
Beside it is a pleasant shady cave,
The holy place of nymphs that are called Naiads.
Therein are mixing-bowls and jars of stone ;
There also hive the bees ; and in the cave
Are very long stone looms, whereon the nymphs
Weave webs of purple dye—a sight to see—

And springs unfailing. Now it hath two doors :
One toward the North wind, by which men go down,
But that toward the South is holier,
And nowise may men pass it ; for it is
The way of the immortals.

Here they rowed in, knowing the place of old.
Full half her length the ship ran on the land
Apace, so well the rowers' arms impelled her.
Then they alighted from the sturdy ship
Upon the beach, and first they lifted up,
With the bright blanket and the linen sheet
Just as they were, Odysseus from the hull,
And laid him down, still overborne by sleep,
Upon the sand. Next they took out the goods
The proud Phæacians gave him, by the grace
Of high Athene, when he set out home.
These in a heap beside the olive's trunk,
Out of the path, they set, lest some wayfarer
Might find and loot them ere Odysseus woke.
Then they themselves made for their home again.
Howbeit the lord of earthquake, not forgetting
The threats wherewith he threatened at the first
Divine Odysseus, sought the will of Zeus :

' O Father Zeus, no more shall I—e'en I—
Be held in honour 'mid immortal gods
When mortal men revere me not at all,
Yea, the Phæacians, who, thou knowest, are
Of mine own stock ! For even now I said
That ere he reached his home Odysseus should
Have many troubles, but I never sought
To rob him root and branch of his return,
Since once thou didst assent and promise it.
But lo, these men have borne him in his sleep
O'er sea in a swift ship, and set him down
In Ithaca, and given him rich gifts,

A wealth of bronze and gold and woven robes,
More than he would have ever won from Troy,
Though he had come safe with his share of loot !'

Then Zeus who rolls the clouds replied and said :
' How now, long-ranged earth-shaker, what a speech
Is this ! The gods nowise dishonour thee.
And hard it were upon our best and oldest
To launch dishonour ; but if any man,
Succumbing to his might and strength, hath failed
In aught to do thee honour, thou canst always
Take vengeance on him, even afterwards.
Do as thou wilt, and as seems good to thee.'

Poseidon, lord of earthquake, answered him :
' E'en as thou sayest, lord of the dark cloud,
Should I have done at once, but that I dread
And shun thine anger always. But I now
Would smite the gallant ship of the Phæacians
Upon the misty deep, as she returns
From carrying him, that they may hold their hands
At last, and cease from carrying men ; and I
Would fling a mighty mountain o'er their city.'

Then Zeus who rolls the clouds replied to him :
' Friend, this is how it seems to me the best.
When all the folk are looking from the town
To see her driving home, hard by the land,
Strike her to stone, a stone that takes the shape
Of a swift ship, that all mankind may marvel ;
And fling a mighty mountain o'er their city.'

Now when Poseidon, lord of earthquake, heard,
To the Phæacians' land of Scheria
He went, and waited there ; and close to shore
She came, the ocean-faring ship, sped light
Upon her course. The earthquake lord drew nigh
And struck her into stone, and rooted her
Beneath, with one sweep of his down-turned hand,

And then he went his way.

But the Phæacians spake to one another,
Those famous mariners of the long oars,
With wingéd words ; and glancing at his neighbour
Thus one would say : ‘ Ah me ! who hath encl ained
Our swift ship on the sea as home she drave ?
Why, even now we saw her full in sight ! ’
So one of them would say, but they knew not
How these things were fulfilled. But in their midst
Alcinous made a speech and said to them :

‘ Lo, now in truth my father’s oracles
Uttered a long time since have come on me !
The sea-god, so he said, was wroth with us
Because we give safe escort to all men :
Poseidon, he declared, would one day wreck
A gallant ship of our Phæacian folk
As back she came across the misty deep
From convoy, and would fling a mighty mountain
About our town. So that old man would say ;
And lo, all this is coming now to pass !
But come, and let us all do as I bid.
Forgo your convoying of mortal men,
Whoe’er he be that comes ; and to Poseidon
Slav twelve choice bulls, if haply he take pity,
Nor fling a mighty mountain o’er our town.’

So said he, and they were alarmed and made
The oxen ready. Thus to king Poseidon
The chiefs and counsellors of the Phæacians’ land
Were praying, as they stood about the altar.

But good Odysseus woke where he lay sleeping
In his own country, though he knew it not
After so long an absence ; for the goddess
Pallas Athene, maid of Zeus, had shed
A mist about him, so that she might make him
Unknown, and tell him everything herself ;

Nor should his own wife know him nor his people
Nor friends, until the suitors should have paid
Full price for all their sins. So everything
Seemed strange unto their lord—the long footpaths,
The sheltering havens, the steep cliffs, the trees
In leaf. He started to his feet and stood
And looked upon his native land, and then
He groaned aloud and with the flat of his hands
He smote his thighs, and said in his distress :

‘ O me, to what men’s land am I come now ?
And are they cruel, savage and unjust,
Or good to guests and of god-fearing mind ?
Now whither am I carrying all this treasure ?
Or whither drift myself ? Would I had stayed
Mid the Phæacians there ! then had I come
Unto some other of the mighty kings,
Who would have used me kindly and have sent me
On my way home. But now I know not where
To stow these things ; yet here I cannot leave them,
Lest haply other men despoil me of them.
Ah then, not wholly wise nor right, it seems,
Were the Phæacian chiefs and counsellors
Who carried me to a strange land ! They promised
To bring me unto clear-seen Ithaca,
But have not made it good. May Zeus requite them,
The suppliants’ god, who watches over all men
And punishes the sinner. But come now,
Let me count up the goods and see, lest they
Have gone off in their hollow ship with aught.’

Therewith he set to count the beauteous tripods,
Cauldrons, and gold and goodly woven raiment,
And of them naught he missed. Then, making moan
For his own land, lamenting sore he stole
Along the shore of the loud-sounding sea.
And near him came Athene, in the likeness

Of a young man, a shepherd of the flock,
Most delicate, as are the sons of kings
And she wore folded over either shoulder
A fine-made cloak, and on her shining feet
Sandals she had, and in her hands a spear
And glad Odysseus was at sight of her,
And met her and in wingéd words addressed her.

‘ Friend, since thou art the first man I have met
In this land, hail ! and mayst thou come on me
With no ill purpose ! Nay, but save my goods
And save thou me, for unto thee I pray
As to a god, and come to thy dear knees.
And this too tell me true, that I may know.
What land, what folk are these ? What men dwell here ?
Is it some clean-seen island, or a shore
Of the rich mainland resting on the brine ? ’

Whereon the keen-eyed goddess said to him :
‘ Stranger, thou art a fool, or come from far,
To ask about this land ! It is not surely
So wholly nameless, but full many know it,
Both all who dwell toward the dawn and sun,
And all behind toward the shadowy West.
’Tis rough indeed, nor fit for driving horses,
And yet not wholly barren, though not broad
In shape. For herein corn there is abundant,
And wine is made, and showers never fail,
Nor copious dew. ’Tis good for feeding goats
And feeding kine ; it hath all kinds of wood,
And watering-pools at hand the whole year through.
Wherefore the name of Ithaca, () stranger,
Has travelled e’en to Troy-land, which, they say,
Is far enough from this Achaean earth.’

So said she, and the sore-tried good Odysseus
Was glad, rejoicing in his native land,
His fathers’ land, according to the saying

Of Pallas, maid of ægis-bearing Zeus.
And unto her he spake with wingéd words ;
Yet not the truth he told, but gave his story
Another bent, for always he was turning
Some cunning purpose over in his breast :

‘ I used to hear of Ithaca, yes, even
In spacious Crete far over sea ; and now
Here am I come myself with these my goods.
As much again I left unto my children
When I was outlawed, after I had killed
Idomeneus' dear son, Orsilochus—
That runner swift, who was in spacious Crete
The fleetest of all men that live by bread—
Because he wished to plunder me of all
The loot of Troy, for which in passages
Of mortal wars and grievous waves I had
Borne pains at heart ; for that I would not serve
Under his father in the Trojans' land
To please him, but commanded my own men.
So with a bronze-tipped spear I smote him, as
Home from the field he came : with one companion
I lay in wait for him beside the road.
Dark midnight held the heavens, and no man
Perceived us, and I took his life unseen.
But, having killed him with my pointed spear,
Straight to a ship I went, and made my prayer
Unto the proud Phœnicians, giving them
Spoil to their hearts' content. I bade them take me
On board their ship and set me down in Pylos
Or goodly Elis, where the Epeans rule.
But of a truth from thence the tempest drove them
Sorely against their will, nor did they mean
To play me false, but beaten from our course
Hither by night we came : with all our strength
We rowed on into port, without a thought

Of supper, though we sorely needed food,
But even as we were we stepped on land
And all lay down. Then there came over me
Sweet sleep, for I was weary ; but they took
My goods out of the hollow ship, and set them
Down there where I was lying on the sands ;
And re-embarked and went upon their way
To the well-peopled land of the Sidonians,
But I was left here with a troubled heart.'

So said he, and the keen-eyed goddess smiled
And stroked him with her hand. She made herself
In shape a woman, tall and beautiful
And skilled in splendid works ; and unto him
With wingéd words she spoke :

' A cunning, knavish fellow he would be,
To better thee in every kind of guile,
Ay, though a god should meet thee ! wilful soul,
Subtle of wit, insatiate of wiles,
Not e'en in thine own land, it seems, wert thou
To drop the tricks and lying tales which thou
From thy heart's bottom lovest ! Come, let us talk
Of this no more. We both are versed in craft,
Since thou in speech and counsel art of all men
Easily best, and I among the gods
Am famed for wit and cunning. Yet didst thou
Not know me, Pallas Athene, maid of Zeus !
Me who am with thee always and defend thee
In all adventures ; yea, and made thee loved
By the entire Phæacians. Now am I
Come hither to contrive with thee a plan,
And hide the wealth which the Phæacian nobles
By my design and purpose gave thee, when
Thou settest forth for home ; and tell thee all
The woes which thou art fated to accomplish
In that good house of thine. But be thou strong,

For so thou must, and tell no man nor woman,
Not one, that thou hast after all returned
From wandering ; but endure thy many griefs
In silence, suffering the despite of men.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' Hard is it, goddess, for a mortal man,
However wise, to know thee when he meets thee,
For thou dost take all kinds of shapes. But this
I do know well : thou wert benign to me
In the old days while we made war in Troy,
We sons of the Achæans. But when we
Had sacked the lofty citadel of Priam
And sailed away, and some god had dispersed
The Achæans, never since that time have I
Beheld thee nor observed thee, maid of Zeus,
Boarding my ship to ward off woe from me.
But with a heart sore-stricken in my breast
Ever I wandered on, until the gods
Delivered me from evil—till one day
In the rich land of the Phæacians, thou
Didst speak to cheer me up, and wert thyself
My guide unto their city. But I now
Beseech thee by thy Father—for I cannot
Think I am come to clear-seen Ithaca,
But roam some other land ; and thou, methinks,
Sayest these things in mockery to delude
My mind—declare to me if I am come
In very truth to my dear native land.'

Then the keen-eyed Athene answered him :
Ay, thou hast always some such thought in mind.
Therefore I cannot leave thee in thy sorrow,
For thou art courteous, close of wit, and shrewd ;
Why, any other man on his return
From wandering would have hurried eagerly
To see his wife and children in his house ;

But thou hast yet no mind to hear or learn,
Till thou hast proved thy wife, who sits at home
Just as before, and ever wearily
The nights and days wane for her as she weeps.
But as for me, I never doubted this,
But in my heart I knew thou wouldst come home
With loss of all thy comrades. But, know thou,
I had no mind to fight my father's brother,
Poseidon, who had charged his heart with anger
Against thee, wroth that thou didst blind his son.
Come, I will show thee, that thou mayst believe,
This seat of Ithaca. Here is the harbour
Of Phorcys, ancient of the sea ; and here
The long-leaved olive at the harbour's head ;
And near it is a pleasant shady cave,
Unto the nymphs who are called Naiads hallowed.
There, look thou, is the vaulted cavern where
Thy wont it was to offer to the nymphs
Thy hecatombs acceptable ; and yonder,
Clad in its forests, is Mount Neriton.'

The goddess as she spake dispelled the mist :
The land appeared. Then was Odysseus glad,
That sore-tried goodly man, and he rejoiced
In his own land and kissed grain-giving earth.
Anon with lifted hands he prayed the nymphs :

' O Naiad nymphs, daughters of Zeus, methought
Never to see you more, but now I hail you
With loving prayers : yea, and will give you gifts
As of aforetime, if the daughter of Zeus,
Who drives the spoil, shall in her goodness grant me
To live, and bring to manhood my dear son.'

Then the keen-eyed Athene said to him :
' Be of good cheer ; let not thy heart be troubled
For these things. Come, let us bestow at once
Thy goods in this mysterious cave's recess,

That there they may abide for thee in safety,
While we take thought how all may turn out best.'

Therewith she plunged into the shadowy cave
And rummaged its recesses ; and Odysseus
Brought all his treasure thither, even the gold
And stubborn bronze and the fine woven raiment
Which the Phœacians gave him. Carefully
He laid them by ; and Pallas, maid of Zeus,
Who bears the ægis, set upon the door
A stone. Then by the sacred olive's trunk
They twain sate down, and cogitated death
For the o'erbearing suitors ; and Athene,
The keen-eyed goddess, was the first to speak :

' Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, now bethink thee how
Thou mayst lay hands upon the shameless suitors,
Who now for three years' space have lorded it
About thy house, courting thy godlike wife
And offering wooers' gifts. But ever mourning
For thy return she giveth hope to all,
And hath a promise for each man, and sends
Them messages, but all the time her mind
Is set on other things.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' What ! surely in my house I must have died
Atrides Agamemnon's sordid death,
Hadst not thou, goddess, duly told me all !
Come now, and weave some stratagem whereby
I may requite them ; stand thou close beside me,
And put in me great strength of soul, as when
We loosed the shining coronal of Troy.
Ah, keen-eyed one, wouldst thou take post beside me
In thine old vigour, I would fight, great goddess,
Allied with thee, against three hundred men,
If thou wouldst succour me with all thy heart !'

At that keen-eyed Athene answered him :
' Yea, of a truth will I be at thy side
Nor will forget thee whensoever we are
About this task. As for the suitors who
Devour thy substance, many a one, methinks,
Shall spatter the vast earth with blood and brains.
Come, I will make thee so that never man
Shall know thee. I will wither the fair skin
On thy lithe limbs, and waste the golden hair
From off thy head, and clothe thee in a garb
So foul that one would shudder at the sight
Of human being in it ; I will dim
Thine eyes that were before so beautiful,
To make thee look a fright to all the suitors,
And to thy wife and son, whom thou didst leave
At home. And go thou to the swineherd first,
Who keeps thy pigs and still is loyal to thee,
And loves thy son and thy devoted wife.
Thou'lt find him sitting by the swine ; they feed
By Arethusa's spring and Corax' rock,
Eating the acorns to their heart's content
And drinking the dark water, just the fare
That makes pigs rich and fat. Abide thou there
And sit by him, and ask him everything,
Till I have gone to the fair ladies' land
Of Sparta, to recall Telemachus
Thy loving son, Odysseus, who is gone
To Menelaus in wide Lacedæmon,
To seek for tidings of thee, if thou wert
Still anywhere alive.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' But why didst not thou tell him, since thy mind
Knows everything ? Or was it that he too,
Roaming the tireless sea, may be distressed,
And other men may eat his living up ?'

Then keen-eyed Athene answered him :
‘ Nay now, for him let not thy heart be heavy.
’Twas I that guided him, that going thither
He might win good report. Nor hath he toil,
But sits serenely in Atrides’ house,
With ample comfort round him. True it is,
The young men lie in wait with their black ship
To kill him ere he reach his native land ;
But that shall never be, methinks ; ere that
The earth shall close o’er certain of the suitors
Who eat thy substance.’

With that Athene touched him with her wand.
She parched the fair skin on his supple limbs ;
She spoiled the golden hair from off his head ;
And all over his limbs she put the skin
Of an old, aged man ; and bleared his eyes
That were before so beautiful. She put
Strange clothes on him, a vile old rag and tunic,
Tattered and foul, begrimed with dirty smoke ;
And cast around him the great mangy skin
Of a swift doe, and gave him staff and scrip—
A wretched mouldy scrip, slung on a string.

So they conferred and parted. Then Athene
Went to bright Sparta to recall his son.

BOOK XIV

But forth he went, Odysseus, from the harbour
By a rough path up through the woods between
The heights, to where Athene had directed
That he should find the goodly swineherd, who
Was careful for his substance, above all
The slaves that good Odysseus had acquired.

He found him sitting in the portico,
Where he had built on a commanding site
High up, his court—a great and goodly court
With open space around it. This the swineherd
Had built to house his absent master's pigs,
Himself, without the knowledge of his mistress
Or old Laertes. And with heavy stones
He built it, and set thorns on it for coping.
Along its length and breadth he drove in stakes
Set thick and close outside, which he had made
By splitting up an oak to its dark core.
Twelve styes he made inside, to bed the pigs,
One near another, and in each were penned
A fifty wallowing sows, brood sows ; the boars
Slept outside ; they were fewer far in number,
Because the godlike suitors kept them down
By feasting on them ; for the swineherd used
Always to send them in the best of all
The fatted hogs, three hundred and three score
In count. And always near at hand four dogs,
Fierce as wild beasts, were sleeping, which the swineherd,
Masterful man, had bred. Now he himself
Was fitting sandals to his feet and cutting
A good brown ox-hide up, while his three mates

Were gone this way and that with droves of swine ;
And to the city he had sent the fourth
Perforce to take a boar to the proud suitors,
To slay and satisfy their soul with meat.

Then suddenly the baying watch-dogs saw
Odysseus, and ran at him barking loud ;
But down the shrewd man sate and dropped the stick
Out of his hand. By his own farmstead there
He must have been mauled badly, but behind
Hot-foot the swineherd on the instant came ;
He dropped the hide ; he dashed out through the gate,
And shouting at the dogs he drove them off
This way and that way with a shower of stones ;
And spake unto his lord :

‘ Old man, the dogs had nearly rent thee then,
All of a sudden, and I should have had
To stand the blame ! Ay, and the gods have given me
Troubles and woes already. Here sit I
Mourning and grieving for a godlike master,
And rear fat swine for other men to eat ;
While he, belike in want of food, is roaming
Some land or town of men of foreign speech,
If yet indeed he lives and sees the sunlight.
But come with me, old man, into the hut,
That having had thy fill of bread and wine
Thou too mayst tell thy story, whence thou art,
And all the sufferings thou hast undergone.’

With that the good herd led him to the hut,
And took him in and made him sit and strewed
Thick brush beneath him, and spread over it
A wild and shaggy goat’s hide, large and soft,
On which he used to sleep himself. Odysseus
Rejoiced to be so welcomed, and he spake
And said to him :

‘ May Zeus and all the other deathless gods

Grant thee thy dearest wish, sir, since thou hast
Received me heartily.'

Then didst thou, herd Eumæus, answer him :
' Stranger, if e'en a sorrier man than thou
Were come, 'twould not be right for me to slight him ;
Because all guests and beggars are from Zeus,
And though our gift be small yet is it welcome.
For thus it is with slaves, alway in fear,
When over them young lords like ours bear rule.
For in good truth the gods have stayed the coming
Of him who would have loved me from his soul,
And given me belongings of mine own—
A house, a bit of land, a much-sought wife—
Whate'er a kindly master gives a thrall
Who has worked hard for him and whose emprise
The god hath prospered, even as this work
Of mine, whereat I bide. Wherefore would he,
My lord, if he had grown an old man here,
Have plenteously rewarded me ; but he
Is dead—as would that all the stock of Helen
Had perished root and branch ! for that she loosed
The knees of many warriors. For he too
Went to win recompense for Agamemnon
To Ilios, land of horses, that he might
War with the Trojans.'

With that he quickly belted up his coat,
And went off to the styes, wherein were penned
The tribes of swine ; and thence he chose out two
And brought them in and slew them both, and singed
And cut them up and spitted them ; and when
He had roasted all the meat, he brought and set it
Before Odysseus, hot upon the spits,
And sprinkled over it white barley meal.
Then in a bowl of ivy-wood he mixed
Honey-sweet wine, and sate down opposite

Odysseus and encouraged him to eat :

‘ Now eat, my guest, such fare as slaves command,
Young sucking pigs ; the fatted hogs the suitors
Eat, without thought of punishment, or pity.
Indeed the good gods love not froward doings,
But honour justice and men’s righteous acts.
Why, e’en when foemen, men implacable,
Alight on foreign coasts, and Zeus vouchsafes
Them booty and they pack their ships with it,
And sail for home—e’en on their hearts there falls
Strong fear of heaven’s vengeance. But these men—
Yes, they know something ; they have had from heaven
Some hint of his sad ending, seeing that
They do not choose to do their wooing justly,
Nor go back to their own, but at their ease
They waste our wealth with insolence, and have
No thought of sparing. For each day and night
That comes of Zeus they make a sacrifice
Not of one victim only nor yet two,
And wine they draw and waste it wantonly.
For in good truth his wealth was great past telling.
None of the chiefs in Ithaca itself
Or on the dusky mainland hath the like ;
In fact no score of men together have
Such wealth ; lo, I will tell thee all the count.
Twelve herds of kine he owns upon the mainland ;
As many flocks of sheep, and droves of swine,
And ranging herds of goats, which foreigners
Or his own herdsmen pasture ; here too browse
By the land’s end, eleven herds in all
Of ranging goats, with good men watching them—
And each of them drives every day one goat,
Whichever seems the fattest of his flocks,
Unto the suitors. But for me, I guard
And keep these sows ; and I pick out with care

And send the finest of the boars to them.'

Meanwhile Odysseus ate his food with zest
And drank his wine in silence eagerly,
And sowed the seeds of evil for the suitors ;
And when he had dined and satisfied his soul
With food, the swineherd filled the bowl from which
He used to drink himself, and gave it him
Brimful of wine. He took it and was glad,
And spake and said to him with wingéd words :

'Who was he, friend, the man who bought thee then
Out of his wealth, a man so very rich
And strong as thou dost tell ? Said'st thou, he died
To win for Agamemnon recompense ?
Tell me, in case perchance I know him, being
Such as thou sayst. For never doubt, Zeus knows
And all the other deathless gods, if I
Have seen him and could give thee news of him ;
For I have wandered far.'

The swineherd answered him, that master man :
'Old man, not if some wanderer arrived
With honest news of him, would he convince
His wife and son. But vagrants lightly lie
When they need entertainment, nor are minded
To tell the truth. Whoever strays this way
To Ithaca, he goes unto my lady
With some deceitful tale ; and she receives him
Kindly and well and asks him the whole story,
While tears fall from her eyelids as she mourns ;
As is the way of woman, when her lord
Hath died afar. And thou too quick enough,
Might put a tale together, if someone
Would give thee cloak and coat for raiment, gaffer!
But as for him, the dogs and birds of prey
By now are like to have stripped his bones of flesh,
And life hath left him ; or at sea the fishes

Have eaten him, and on the shore his bones
Are lying, wrapped in sand-drift. So must he
Have perished yonder : and to all his friends
Grief is appointed for the days to come,
But most to me ; ne'er shall I find again
So kind a lord, however far I go ;
Not though I seek my parents' house again,
Where I at first was born, and with their hands
They reared me. Yet henceforth 'tis not for them
That I so greatly grieve, though fain I am
To see them with mine eyes and be at home ;
But longing for Odysseus who is gone
Lays hold on me. He is not here ; but I
Name him with reverence, stranger, for he was
Right fond of me and cared for me at heart.
My liege I call him, though he is far away.'

Then steadfast, brave Odysseus answered him :
' My friend, since thou wilt none of it, but sayst
That he will never come again, and ever
Thy heart is unbelieving, now will I
Affirm to thee—not lightly but on oath—
Odysseus shall return ! And let me have
The wages of good news as soon as he
Comes hither home ; clothe me in cloak and tunic,
Fine garments. But till then, however sore
My need, I will take nothing. For I hate—
Hate like the gates of Hell—a man who tells
A lying tale through pinch of poverty.
Now be my witness Zeus, above all gods,
And this the hospitable board and hearth
That I have reached, noble Odysseus' hearth,
That of a truth, as I do tell thee, all
These things shall be fulfilled. This very year
Odysseus shall come home. As the old moon
Wanes and the new is born, shall he return,

And take his vengeance upon all those here
Who do his wife and gallant son dishonour.'

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
“ 'Twill not be I then, gaffer, who will pay thee
Thy wages of good news ! nor will Odysseus
Come home for ever. But let be, and drink,
And let us turn our thoughts to other things.
Remind me not of these, because my soul
Is always sad within me, when one speaks
Of my good lord. As for that oath of thine
We will let it go ; and yet I would Odysseus
Might come, as we, Penelope and I,
Godlike Telemachus, and old Laertes,
All wish. But now I cannot cease from grief
For his son's sake, Telemachus, whom he
Begot. The gods had nursed him like a sapling,
And he, thought I, would be no worse a man
'Mid men than his dear father, wonderful
In face and form ; when someone, god or man,
Upset the balance of his wits, and forth
He went to search for tidings of his father
To sacred Pylos. And the lordly suitors
Are lying in wait for him on his way back,
So that godlike Arceisius' progeny
May perish nameless out of Ithaca.
Well, well, no more of him ! he may be taken,
Or may escape, if Cronos' son extends
A hand to save him. But, old man, come thou,
Tell me of thine own troubles. And herein
Say true, that I may know. Who among men
Art thou, and whence ? Where are thy town and parents ?
What kind of ship conveyed thee here ? And how
Did seamen carry thee to Ithaca ?
Who said they that they were ? For in no wise
Can I suppose thou camest here afoot.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ Indeed now I will tell thee all most plain.
Would that within thy hut we two had now
Food and sweet wine enough to feast a span
In peace, while others went about their work.
Then easily for one whole year could I
Tell on, nor yet make a full end of telling
The troubles of my heart, and all the toils
That by the will of heaven I have endured.

‘ By birth I claim to be from spacious Crete,
A rich man’s son. And many other sons
Were bred and brought up in his homestead, born
Of his true wife ; and though my mother was
Bought for a concubine, yet he of whom
I boast my getting, Castor, Hylax’ son,
Esteemed me even as his straight-born sons.
At that time he was honoured as a god
For his estate and wealth and famous sons
Among the Cretans in the land. Howbeit
The fates of death bore him to Hades’ house,
And his proud sons divided up his substance
And cast lots over it. Unto me they gave
A wretched pittance and allotted me
A house. But I took me to wife a lady
Of a rich clan, by reason of my valour,
For neither cur nor runaway was I.
But now all this is lost. Yet nonetheless
Seeing the stubble thou canst guess, methinks,
What the grain was ; for true it is, I have
Exceeding store of trouble. But Athene
And Ares gave me courage, and the strength
That breaks the ranks of men. Whenever I
Picked out the best men for an ambuscade,
Sowing the seeds of evil for the foe,
My manly soul gave never death a thought ,

But far the first was I to leap in front
And spear whoever in the foeman's ranks
Could not outrun me. Such was I in war,
But labour in the fields I never loved,
Nor household thrift, that nurse of goodly children .
But ever to my taste were ships of oars,
And war, and polished spears and darts—grim things
Whereat most others shudder. Well, no doubt
I loved the things the gods put in my heart :
For divers men delight in divers works.
Nine times, before the sons of the Achæans
Set foot upon the soil of Troy, had I
Led my swift ships and men against strange peoples,
And used to make great gains, whereof I chose
What liked me best, and afterwards by lot
I won much too. So my house soon grew rich,
And then among the Cretans I became
Esteemed and feared.

‘ Howbeit when Zeus, whose voice is heard afar,
Planned the grim march that loosed so many knees,
’Twas then on me and famed Idomeneus
The people called to lead the fleet to Troy :
“ No ” was impossible ; the people’s voice
Constrained me. There we sons of the Achæans
For nine years warred, and in the tenth we sacked
The town of Priam, and took ship for home ;
And some god scattered the Achæans. But
I had no fortune. Zeus the counsellor
Planned mischief for me. Only for one month
I stayed delighting in my wedded wife
And sons and treasure. Then my spirit bade me
Fit me out ships with care, and sail for Egypt
With my brave men. Nine ships I fitted out
And crews collected soon. For six days then
My trusty comrades feasted, and I gave them

Abundant victims to do sacrifice
Unto the gods and make a feast themselves.
But on the seventh day we went aboard
And sailed from spacious Crete, with the North wind
Behind us fresh and fair, and light we ran
As it down-stream ; ay, and no mischief came
To any ship, but safe and sound we sate,
While wind and pilots kept the squadron straight.

‘ On the fifth day we came to the fair flood
Of Egypt, where I moored my curving ships
Within the flood of Egypt. Then I gave
Orders in person to my trusty men
To hide there with the ships and guard the ships,
While I sent spies out unto points of vantage.
But they succumbed to wantonness, and followed
Their own brute force, and soon they fell to wasting
The fair fields of the Egyptians, killing men
And carrying off their wives and little children.
Then the alarm sped quickly to the city,
And people heard the shouting, and they came
At streak of day, and all the plain was filled
With foot and chariots and the flash of bronze.
Then Zeus, the lord of lightning, on my men
Sent evil panic, and not one dare stand
And face it, for on all sides peril lay.
Now many of us they slew with the sword’s edge,
But some they carried up alive, to slave
For them perforce. But Zeus himself inspired me
With a new thought—yet would that I had died
And met my fate in Egypt, for misfortune
Still waited to receive me. From my head
I dropped my sturdy helmet, and my shield
From off my shoulders, and let fall the spear
Out of my hand, and went myself and faced
The chariot of the king, and clasped and kissed

His knees ; and he delivered me in pity,
And set me in his car and took me weeping
Unto his home. Ay, and how many made
A rush to slay me with their ash-wood spears !
For they were mad with anger. But the king
Fended them off, minding the wrath of Zeus,
The god of strangers, who above all others
Resents ill deeds.

‘So there I stayed seven years, and I amassed
Much wealth among the Egyptians, for they all
Made gifts to me. But when the eighth year went
Round in its course, then a Phœnician came,
A practised rogue, a greedy rogue, who had
Already done much mischief among men.
Subtly he wrought on me, and took me with him
Until we reached Phœnicia, where his house
And treasures lay. There I abode with him
For one full year. But when the months and days
At last were ended, as the year rolled round
And back the seasons came, he set me aboard
A sea-bound ship for Libya, on the pretext
That I should help him ship a cargo thither,
But purposing in fact to sell me there
And get a monstrous price. Without a choice
I followed him on board, though I suspected.
And with the North wind blowing fresh and fair
The ship ran on her mid-sea course windward
Of Crete, and Zeus devised destruction for them.
But when we had left Crete, and there appeared
No other land, but only sky and sea,
’Twas then Cronion poised a pitch-black cloud
Above the hollow ship, and in its shadow
The deep grew dark, and on the instant Zeus
Thundered and shot his flame upon the ship ;
And smitten by his thunderbolt she reeled

From stem to stern, and filled with sulphur smoke,
And out fell all the crew. Upon the waves
Round the black ship like sea-gulls they were borne,
And the god reft them of their coming home.
But in mine hour of anguish Zeus himself
Put the huge mast-pole of the blue-prowed ship
Into my hands, to save me yet again.
Round it I clung, and the malignant winds
Drave me : nine days they drave me ; on the tenth
Dark night the mighty roller brought me near
The land of the Thesprotians. There the king,
Prince Pheidon, took me in without a price ;
For his own son came on me overborne
With cold and weariness, and seized my hand
And raised me up and led me till we came
Home to his father's palace ; and he clad me
In raiment, cloak and tunic.

‘ There heard I of Odysseus ; for the king
Said he had entertained and welcomed him
Upon his journey home. He showed me all
The treasures—bronze and gold and hard-wrought iron—
Odysseus had amassed ; why, it would feed
His children after for ten generations,
So vast the treasures were which he had stored
In the king's chambers. “ But ” said he, “ Odysseus
Is to Dodona gone, to learn the will
Of Zeus from the high-branching holy oak,
How he shall come to Ithaca's rich land
After long absence, whether openly
Or unperceived.” And to my very face,
As in his house he poured drink-offerings forth,
He sware the ship was waiting on the shore
With crew at station, which should convoy him
To his dear native land. But me he sent
Ere that ; because a ship of the Thesprotians

Chanced to be sailing for Dulichium,
The land of wheat. He bade them bear me thither
With heed to king Acastus ; but with them
An evil plan concerning me found favour,
That I might still be plunged in the abyss
Of trouble. So when our seafaring ship
Had sailed a great way from the land, anon
They set about to make a slave of me.
They stripped me of my garments, coat and mantle,
And round me cast this other sorry cloak
And coat, these tatters here before thine eyes.
And to the farms of clear-seen Ithaca
They came at even. Then they bound me fast
In the decked galley with a twisted rope,
While going ashore they took their supper quickly
On the sea-beach. But in a flash the gods
Themselves unbent my bonds ; and with this rag
Rolled round my head, down the smooth gangway plank
I slid, and set my breast to sea, and swam
With both hands striking out, and very soon
Was out of the water and beyond their reach.
Then I went up, and found a leafy thicket
Where I lay crouching : to and fro they went
With noisy cries ; but as they thought it useless
To go on searching further, they returned
Aboard their hollow ship again. But me
The gods themselves hid easily, and brought me
Nigh to the homestead of a man of wisdom ;
For still maybe it is my lot to live.'

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
' O my poor guest, but thou hast stirred my heart
With all this story of thy miseries
And wanderings ! but in one respect, methinks,
Thou hast not said aright, nor shalt convince me
Touching Odysseus. Why should one like thou

Lie vainly ? Of my lord's return I know
Myself too well ; that he was hated wholly
By all the gods, in that they slew him not
Among the Trojans, or in his friends' arms,
When he had wound up all the skein of war.
Then had the whole Greek army made his tomb,
And for his son too had he won great fame
To come ; but now the spirits of the storm
Have swept him off, and left no news of him.
For me, I dwell secluded with my pigs,
And go not to the town, unless perchance
The wise Penelope desires my presence
When tidings come to her, I know not whence.
Then all the people sit around and question
The messenger full close, both those who mourn
Their long-lost lord, and others who are glad
To eat his living up without atonement.
But nought care I to question or enquire,
Since an Aetolian once deluded me
With his false tale. Now he had killed his man,
And after wandering wide o'er earth, he came
Unto my farm and I received him kindly.
He said that at Idomeneus' abode
Amid the Cretans he had seen Odysseus
Mending his ships which stormy winds had shattered ;
" And he will come " said he " by summèr tide
Or harvest, with his godlike company,
Bringing much wealth." And thou too, sad old man,
Seeing a god hath brought thee here, seek not
To please me nor to cheat me with thy lies !
Not for that reason will I show thee honour
Or kindness, but because I reverence Zeus,
The strangers' god, and pity thee thyself.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Why, what an unbelieving heart thou hast,

Seeing I have not even with my oath
Prevailed, nor yet persuade thee ! But come now,
Let's make a bargain ; and in season due
The gods who hold Olympus shall bear witness
For both of us. If to this house thy lord
Returns, then give me raiment, cloak and tunic,
And send me onward to Dulichium
Where I desire to be. But if thy lord
Comes not as I declare he will, then set
The slaves to hurl me down some mighty cliff,
To warn another beggar 'gainst deception.'

And the good swineherd answered him and said :
' Yea, sir, indeed I should win praise and merit
'Mid men, both now and afterwards, if I
Who brought thee to my hut and gave thee welcome
Should slay thee then, and rob thee of thy life.
A good heart truly should I have thereafter
To pray to Zeus Cronion ! But 'tis time
For supper ; and I hope my mates will soon
Be here, that we may make a savoury supper
Ready inside the hut.'

While they were talking thus with one another
The swineherds and the swine drew near. They shut
The sows up for the night inside their styes,
And as the sows were being stalled, there rose
A wondrous noise. Then the good swineherd called
Unto his fellows, saying :

' Bring out the choicest boar that I may kill him
For this far-travelled guest ; and we besides
Shall profit by him, who have slaved and toiled
So long by reason of the white-tusked swine,
While others eat our work without atonement.'

At that, he split some logs with his grim axe.
The others brought inside a fine fat boar,
A five-year-old, and set him by the hearth.

Nor did the herd forget the deathless gods
Because he had an understanding heart ;
But as first-fruits he cast upon the fire
Hairs from the tusker's head, and made his prayer
To all the gods, that wise Odysseus might
Come home again. Then drawing himself up
He took a log which he had left unsplit
When he was splitting wood, and smote the boar ;
And life forsook him. Then they cut his throat
And singed the boar, and quickly cut him up.
And for first offering the swineherd took
Raw flesh from every limb, and wrapped it up
In the rich fat, and cast it in the fire
When he had sprinkled it with barley meal.
The rest they cut up small and spitted it
And cooked it carefully, and drew it all
Off from the spits, and put it in a heap
On carving boards. The swineherd rose to carve,
Well knowing what was fair. In seven parts
He parted it, when he had carved the whole.
One portion with a prayer he set apart
For Hermes, son of Maia, and for the Nymphs,
And gave the rest one each, and to Odysseus
He gave the piece of honour, the long chine
Of the tusked boar, and cheered his master's heart
And deep Odysseus spake and said to him :
' Eumæus, since for all my sorry state
'Thou dost me kindly honour, mayst thou be
As dear to Father Zeus as unto me ! '

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
' Eat, and enjoy thy food, such as it is,
My luckless guest ! the god will give one thing
And hold another back, e'en as he will,
For he can do all things.'

With that he burned the firstlings to the gods

Who live for ever. Then when he had made
Libation with the sparkling wine, he handed
The cup unto Odysseus, city-sacker ;
And sate down by his portion. And the bread
Mesaulius served them, whom the swineherd had
Acquired himself, his master being away,
Alone without the knowledge of his mistress
Or old Laertes ; he had purchased him
With his own substance from the Taphians. So
They stretched their hands to the good cheer before them ;
But when desire for meat and drink was gone,
Mesaulius took away the food, and they,
Sated with bread and meat, were moved to rest.

Now foul, without a moon, came on the night ;
And all night long Zeus rained, and the West wind,
Ever the rainy wind, blew strongly. Then
Odysseus, making trial of the swineherd,
To see if he would strip off his own cloak
And hand it him, or tell one of his mates
To do so, since he cared for him so kindly,
Spake out among them :

‘ Hark now, Eumæus, and all you his men ;
I have a tale to tell, which is a prayer ;
For the wine bids me—this befooling wine,
Which sets a man, though very wise he be,
Singing and laughing softly, and excites him
To dance, and blurts aloud the word that were
Better unspoken. Still, since I already
Have broken out in speech, I will tell all.
O would that I were young and my strength firm
As when we mobilised and led our ambush
Beneath Troy town ! The leaders were Odysseus
And Menelaus, Atreus’ son ; and I
Commanded third with them. for so they ordered.
Now when we reached the town with its steep wall,

We lay down in thick brush-wood round the city
Among the reeds and marshes, crouched beneath
Our shields. And foul and frosty came the night,
Once the North wind went down, and from above
Fell snow like rime most bitter cold, and ice
Formed on our shields. Now all the rest had cloaks
And tunics, and in peace they slept, their shields
Guarding their shoulders ; but I foolishly
Had left my cloak behind me with my men,
(Not thinking that e'en so I should be cold)
And come with only shield and coloured kilt.
And when 'twas now the third watch of the night
And stars had crossed the zenith, in that hour
I nudged Odysseus with my elbow (he
Was close beside) and spoke to him, and he
Gave ear to me at once :

“ Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, I can last no longer
'Mid men alive ! This cold is killing me.
I have no cloak ; some god fooled me to come
With tunic only ; there is no way out.”

‘ I spake ; and thereon he thought out his plan ,
So good he was in counsel and in battle
And whispering said to me : “ Now say no more,
Lest some one else of the Achæans hear thee.”

‘ With that he raised his head upon his elbow ;
“ Friends ” said he, “ listen. In my sleep there came
A dream from heaven. See, we have left the ships
Too far away. I want some volunteer
To carry word to Agamemnon, son
Of Atreus, shepherd of the host, if he
Would send us reinforcements from the fleet.”

‘ He spake, and Thoas, son of Andræmon,
Leapt up at once and shed his purple mantle
And set out running to the ships. But I

Lay in his clothes exultant ; and there broke
Dawn of the golden throne. O, were I young
And firm of strength as once I was ! For then
One of the swineherds on this farm would give me
A cloak, both out of friendship and regard
For a good soldier ; but they scorn me now
Because I have these sorry rags upon me.'

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
' Gaffer, this tale is good that thou hast told.
Nor so far hast thou spoken aught amiss
Or void of profit ; wherefore thou shalt not
Lack raiment nor aught else that is the due
Of sorry suppliants when they meet with friends,
This night at least ; but in the morning thou
Must flap thine own rags round thee, for we have
Not many changes here of cloaks or coats,
But each has only one. Yet when he comes,
The dear son of Odysseus, he himself
Will give thee cloak and coat to wear, and send thee
Where'er thy heart and spirit bid thee go.'

With that he sprang up, and beside the fire
He set a bed for him, and on it threw
Goat-skins and sheep-skins. There Odysseus lay,
And over him the swineherd cast a cloak
Which he kept by him, thick and warm, to serve
For change of clothes when a fierce storm arose.

So there Odysseus slept, and by his side
Slept the young men. But the swineherd disliked
To lie a-bed at home far off his pigs ;
So he made ready to go out ; and glad
Odysseus was, to see him take such care
Of his lord's substance while he was away.
About his sturdy shoulders first he slung
His pointed sword ; then to defy the wind
He donned a good thick cloak, and picking up

The fleece of a big, fatted goat, and, taking
A light, sharp spear to fend off dogs and men,
He went to lay him down where the tusked boars
Were sleeping in a hollow of the rock
That kept the North wind off.

BOOK XV

Now to broad Lacedæmon went Athene,
To put the gallant son of great Odysseus
In mind of home and quicken his return.
Telemachus and Nestor's noble son
She found a-bed within the outer hall
Of famous Menelaus. Nestor's son
Sweet sleep had overcome ; but slumber sweet
Had got no hold upon Telemachus,
For cares about his father kept him waking
Through the immortal night ; and near she came,
Keen-eyed Athene, and she spake to him .

‘ No longer is it well, Telemachus,
For thee to wander far from home, and leave
Thy wealth, and in thy house such roisterers,
Lest they divide and utterly devour
Thy stock, while thou on a vain road art gone.
No, rouse thou Menelaus of the war-cry
As soon as may be to despatch thee hence,
That thou mayst find thy noble mother still
At home. Lo, now her father and her brothers
Press her to wed Eurymachus, for he
Outbids all other suitors with his presents
And has increased his gifts. Now see that she
Does not take off some treasure from the house
Against thy wish. Thou knowest how the heart
Of woman is : whatever man she weds,
She wishes to increase his house, but hath
Her former children and her own young lord,
Once he is dead, no more in memory,
Nor asks about him. But go thou thyself,

And unto whomsoever of the maids
Thou deemest best, commit thy goods, until
The gods shall send thee a right noble bride.
And I will tell thee something else ; do thou
Lay it to heart. The best men of the suitors
Want of set purpose for thee, in the strait
’Twixt Ithaca and craggy Samos, seeking
To slay thee ere thou reach thy native land.
But that I cannot think shall be ; the earth
Shall sooner close o’er certain of the suitors
Who eat thy living up. But do thou hold
Thy sturdy ship well off the isles, and sail
By night as well as day ; and of the immortals
The one that hath thee in her ward and keeping
Will send a fair wind in thy wake. But when
Thou touchest first the shore of Ithaca,
Send forward to the city ship and crew
Yes, all ; but go thou first unto the swineherd
Who keeps thy swine and is devoted to thee.
There spend the night, but send him to the city
To carry news to wise Penelope
How that she hath thee safe, from Pylos come.’

So saying she sped off to high Olympus.
But he woke Nestor’s son from his sweet sleep,
Touching him with his heel, and said to him :

‘ Wake up, Peisistratus Nestorides !
Bring up thy strong-hoofed steeds and harness them
Unto the car, that we may speed us on.’

Then Nestor’s son, Peisistratus, replied :
‘ Telemachus, however keen we are
To start, it is impossible for us
To drive through the dark night. ’Twill soon be dawn.
Wait till prince Menelaus, famous spearman,
Brings gifts and lays them on the car, and sends us
Away with words of kind farewell ; because

A guest remembers all his days the man
Who shows him loving-kindness as a host.'

He spake, and presently came Dawn, gold-throned ;
And towards them Menelaus of the war-cry
Came, risen from his bed by fair-haired Helen.
And when the prince, Odysseus' well-loved son,
Saw him, in haste he donned his coloured tunic,
And flung a great cloak round his sturdy shoulders,
And from the door went forth. And coming up
To Menelaus, spake Telemachus,
Divine Odysseus' son :

' O Menelaus, fosterling of Zeus,
Thou son of Atreus, leader of the people,
Now send me back to my dear native land ;
Now, for my heart is eager to go home.'

Then Menelaus of the war-cry answered :
' Telemachus, in truth I will not keep thee
Too long here, that art eager to be gone.
Nay, I should blame another, who as host
Was too solicitous or else too surly.
Measure is best in all things. 'Tis as wrong
To speed the guest who does not wish to go
As to detain one who would fain be gone.
The right thing is to treat a guest with kindness
Throughout his stay, and when he wants to go
To speed him on. But wait till I can bring
Fair gifts, and put them for thine eyes to see
Upon the car, and bid the women have
A meal prepared in hall of the good store
'Within. 'Tis doubly good—a pride and honour
For us, a gain for you—that ye should dine
Before going forth o'er the great boundless earth.
And what is more, if thou art fain to travel
Through Hellas and mid Argos, all that way
Will I myself go too, and yoke the horses

For thee, and guide thee to the towns of men ;
And none will let us go just as we came,
But something they will give us to bear off,
Some tripod or some cauldron of good bronze,
Or else a pair of mules or golden cup.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' O Menelaus, fosterling of Zeus,
Thou son of Atreus, leader of the people,
Rather would I return unto mine own
At once, for when I came I left no one
To watch o'er my possessions. I would not
That seeking for my godlike father, I
Myself should perish, nor that I should lose
Some worthy piece of treasure from my halls.'

When Menelaus of the war-cry heard
His saying, then and there he bade his wife
And maids prepare the midday meal in hall, ating
Of the good store they had within. And near
Came Eteoneus Boethoides,
Fresh from his bed, because he had his quarters
Not distant from the palace. Menelaus,
Good at the war-cry, bade him light the fire
And roast some meat ; he hearkened and obeyed.
Then down the prince went to the fragrant store-room,
And not alone, for Helen went with him
And Megapenthes. When they came to where
His treasures lay, the son of Atreus took
A two-eared cup, and ordered Megapenthes,
His son, to bear a silver mixing-bowl ;
And Helen went up to the wardrobes which
Held broidered robes that she had wrought herself.
And lifting one, that beauteous lady took it,
The largest and most finely-worked of all,
That glittered like a star ; it lay the lowest
Of all the robes. Then onward through the house

They passed until they met Telemachus ;
And unto him spake fair-haired Menelaus .

‘ Touching thy journey home, Telemachus,
May Zeus the lord of thunder, Hera’s husband,
Fulfil it as thou wishest in thy heart.

And out of all the presents treasured up
Within my house, will I give thee the one
That is the best and costliest. I will give thee
A well-wrought mixing-bowl of solid silver
With gilded rims, Hephaestus’ handiwork.
Prince Phædimus the king of the Sidonians
Gave it to me, when in his house I sheltered
On my way here. This would I give to thee.’

So saying, in his hands the prince Atides
Placed the two-handled cup. Strong Megapenthes
Then bright silver bowl and set it down
For him ; and fair-faced Helen came
With robe in hand, and spake to him and said .

‘ Lo, I likewise give thee this gift, dear boy ,
Memorial of Helen’s hands, against the hour
Of thy so longed-for wedding, for thy bride
To wear. And meanwhile let it lie in keeping
Of thy dear mother in her room ; and now
I wish thee joy upon thy homeward way
To thy well-built house and native land.’

With that she put it in his hands, and he
Received it gladly. Prince Peisistratus
Took and bestowed the gifts inside the basket
Of the car, and gazed in admiration at them.
Then fair-haired Menelaus led them in,
And on the seats and chairs the twain sate down.
Then a maid brought them water for their hands
And poured it from a fair gold jug for washing
Above a silver basin ; and drew up
Near them a polished board ; and a grave dame

Brought and set bread, and added many dainties,
Providing generously of what she had.
And by the board Boethous' son carved meat
And helped ; and splendid Menelaus' son
Offered the wine. So they put forth their hands
To take the good fare lying ready for them.
And when they had had their fill of meat and drink,
Telemachus and Nestor's gallant son
Harnessed the steeds, and climbed the inlaid car,
And from the gate and echoing portico
Drove forth. And after them the son of Atreus
Went, fair-haired Menelaus ; his right hand
Held a gold cup of honey-hearted wine,
That they might pour libation ere they left.
And standing at the horses' heads, he spake
And pledged the youths :

' Farewell then, both my lads, and bear my ^ſreeting
To Nestor, shepherd of the host, for he
Was kind to me e'en as a father, when
We sons of the Achæans fought in Troy-land.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Yea truly, fosterling of Zeus, will we
Upon our coming tell him all these things
E'en as thou bidst. Would that as surely I,
When I reach Ithaca, might find Odysseus
At home, to tell him how I had from thee
All loving-kindness ere I went my way,
Bringing so many goodly treasures with me !'

E'en as he spake, there flew on his right hand
A bird, an eagle bearing in his talons
A great white goose, a tame villatic fowl ;
And men and women followed shouting. But
Near came the bird and darted to the right
Across the horses' heads ; and they that saw it
Were glad, and all their hearts were comforted.

And first of them to speak was Nestor's son :

‘ Think, Menelaus, fosterling of Zeus,
Thou captain of the host, whether the god
Hath showed this sign for us twain, or for thee.’

So said he, and the soldier Menelaus
Took thought how to interpret it aright
And answer him. But long-robed Helen took
The word from him, and said :

‘ Listen to me, and I will prophesy
As the immortals put it in my heart,
And as I think it will be brought to pass.
E'en as there came this eagle from the mountain,
Where he was born and where his kinsmen are,
And snatched the home-bred goose off, even so
Odysseus after many pains and roving
Shall come back home and take his vengeance ; ay,
Or even now is he at home, and sowing
The seeds of evil for the suitors all.’

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
‘ Now so may Zeus the thunderer, Hera's lord,
Ordain it ! then e'en there far off at home,
Would I do worship to thee as a god.’

He spake, and touched the horses with the whip,
And very swiftly speeding through the city,
They galloped to the plain, and all day long
They tossed the yoke they bore upon their necks.
Then the sun set and all the ways grew dark.
And they arrived at Pheræ, at the house
Of Diocles, son of Ortilochus,
Son of Alpheus ; there they spent the night,
And as his guests he gave them entertainment.

Now soon as early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, they yoked the horses and they mounted
The inlaid car, and drove forth from the gate
And echoing portico. He flicked the horses

To start, and nothing loath the pair sped on
And reached the castled steep of Pylos soon.
Then spake Telemachus to Nestor's son :

‘ Now wilt thou make a promise, son of Nestor,
And as I bid fulfil it ? From of old
By reason of our fathers' friendship we
Call ourselves friends ; and of like age we are,
And in yet closer fellowship this journey
Shall knit us. Do not take me past my ship,
But set me down there, fosterling of Zeus,
Lest yon old man out of his eager kindness
Should keep me in his house against my will.
Needs must I hurry home.’

So said he, and the son of Nestor communed
With his own heart how he might duly promise
And make it good. And as he thought thereon,
In this wise seemed it best to him. He turned
The horses to the swift ship and seashore,
And took the fair gifts out, the gold and raiment
Which Menelaus gave Telemachus,
And set them in the galley's after hold ;
Then urging him he spake with wingéd words :

‘ Quick now aboard, and bid thy men all board her,
Ere I reach home and bring the old man word :
For, well in mind and heart I know it, he
Being so masterful of spirit will
Not let thee go, but will come here himself
To bid thee to his house, and I am sure
Will not go back without thee, and despite
Excuses will be mightily annoyed.’

So saying, he drove on the fair-maned horses
Back to the Pylians' city, and anon
Came to the palace. But Telemachus
Called to his company and gave them orders .

* Set straight the gear in the black ship, my men,

And now aboard, to speed us on our way.'

He spake, and readily they heard and hearkened,
And went aboard at once and manned the thwarts.

Thus was he busy then by the ship's stern
With prayer and burning offerings to Athene,
When there drew nigh to him a foreigner,
One that had killed his man, a fugitive
From Argos ; and he was a soothsayer.
By stock he was descended from Melampus,
Who once abode in Pylos, dam of flocks,
A rich man dwelling in a lordly house
Among the Pylians ; but thereafter he
Came to the land of strangers, flying from
His country, and from Neleus high of heart,
Proudest of men alive, who kept from him
Much wealth by force for one full year. Within
The halls of Phylacus in bitter bonds
Melampus lay and suffered all that time,
Because of Neleus' daughter, and the curse
Of madness, which the goddess, the Erinyes
Who smiteth hard, had laid upon his brain.
Howbeit he escaped his doom, and drave
The lowing kine from Phylace to Pylos,
And punished godlike Neleus' ugly deed,
And brought the lady home to be the wife
Of his own brother. As for him, he sought
A land of strangers, Argos, nurse of horses,
For there it was appointed him to dwell
And govern many Argives. There he wedded
A wife, and builded him a lofty house,
And got Antiphates and Mantius,
Two stalwart sons. Antiphates begot
Great-hearted Oicles, and Oicles
Amphiaraus, rouser of the army,
Whom Zeus the ægis-bearer and Apollo

Loved with all love. And yet did he not reach
The threshold of old age, but died in Thebes,
Because his wife was bribed ; and unto him
Were born Alcmaeon and Amphiloehus.
And Mantus for his sons had Polyphoides
And Cleitus. Now by reason of his beauty
Had gold-throned Dawn borne Cleitus off to dwell
With the immortals ; but Apollo took
For soer proud Polyphoides, far the best
Of men, when once Ampharaus died.
He quarrelled with his father, and migrated
To Hypocleia, and there he made
His home and prophesied to all the world.

His son it was, Theoclymenus by name,
Who now came up beside Telemachus,
And found him pouring wine and making prayer
Beside his swift black ship, and spake to him
In winged words

‘ Friend, since I find thee sacrificing here,
I pray thee by thine offerings, by the god,
Ay, by thy life, and those of all thy comrades,
Answer my question true and hide it not.
Who art thou of the sons of men and whence ?
Where be thy city and thy parents ? ’

And wise Telemachus replied to him :
‘ Ay truly, stranger, will I tell thee all.
My home is Ithaca ; my father is
Odysseus—sure as such a one there was ;
Now he hath perished by an evil fate.
Wherefore I took my black ship and my men
To search for news of him, so long time gone.’

Then godlike Theoclymenus replied :
‘ Likewise am I a stranger to my country,
For I have killed a man, of kin to me ;
And he had many brethren and relations

In Argos, nurse of horses, men who are
Great lords among the Achæans ; so to 'scape
From death and black fate at their hands I flee,
For 'tis my doom, it seems, to roam 'mid men.
But set me on thy ship, seeing that I,
A fugitive, make prayer to thee, lest they
Do me to death ; I feel them on my trail.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' No, in good truth, since thou art keen to come,
I will not thrust thee from my shapely ship.
Come with me then : and in my home thou shalt
Be welcome to the very best we have.'

Therewith he took from him his spear of bronze
And laid it down along the curved ship's deck,
And boarded the seafaring ship himself.
Then in the stern he sate and made to sit
Theoclymenus beside him, and the crew
Loosed the stern cables. Then Telemachus
Aroused his men and bade them grip the tackle,
And speedily they hearkened to his call.
They raised the pine-mast ; in its socket-hole
They fixed it, and with fore-stays made it fast,
And hauled the white sails up with twisted ropes
Of ox-hide. And keen-eyed Athene sent them
A fair wind, blowing strongly through the sky,
So that the running ship as soon as might be
Might cross the salt sea water. So they passed
Crouni and Chalcis with her lovely fountains.

Now the sun set and all the ways grew dark.
And sped on by the breeze of Zeus the ship
Drew nigh Pheæ, and then passed goodly Elis,
Where the Epeans rule. From thence again
He steered for the swift islands, wondering
If he should 'scape from death or be cut off.

Meanwhile Odysseus and the goodly swineherd
Were supping in the hut, and with them supped
The other men. Now when they had had their fill
Of meat and drink, Odysseus spake among them,
To prove the swineherd, whether he would still
Show kindly care for him and bid him stay
There at the farm, or send him to the city :

‘ Hark now, Eumæus, and ye others too.
At daybreak to the town I mean to go
A-begging, that I may not quite eat up
Thee and thy mates. Now then advise me well,
And lend me a good guide to lead me thither.
Once in the city, I will roam alone,
As needs I must, in hope that someone may
Give me a cup of water and a crust.
Yes, I would find divine Odysseus’ house,
And bear my news to wise Penelope,
And mingle with the overweening suitors,
If they perchance out of their boundless store
May give me dinner. Readily would I
Do them good service any way they liked.
For I will tell thee now ; mark thou, and listen.
By favour of the herald Hermes, who
Lends grace and dignity to all men’s work,
No man in all the world can match with me
At servants’ duties—laying a good fire,
And splitting up dry logs, and roasting meat
And carving it, and serving wine—all things
Wherein the lower orders serve their betters.’

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him
In deep distress : ‘ O why has such a thought
Come to thy mind ? Why, sir, thou must be bent
On utter suicide, to think of going
Among the mob of suitors whose excess
And violence goes up to iron heaven !

Not such as thou art are their serving-men,
But young men, gaily clad in cloaks and tunics,
Their heads and handsome faces ever sleek.
These serve them ; and the polished tables groan
With bread and meat and wine. No, bide thou here.
Thy presence worries nobody, not me
Nor any of my fellows with me here.
But when Odysseus' dear son comes, he will
Clothe thee with tunic and with cloak, and send thee
Whitherso'er thy heart and spirit bid.'

Then sore-tried good Odysseus answered him :
' Mayst thou, Eumæus, be as dear to Zeus
Our father, as thou art to me, since thou
Hast made me cease from wandering and sore woe !
For mortal men there is no greater evil
Than wandering ; yet for their curst belly's sake
Men suffer, when the wander-fit comes on them,
And pain and grief. But since thou keepest me
And bidst me wait his coming, tell me touching
Divine Odysseus' mother and his father,
Whom at his going forth he left behind
Upon the threshold of old age. Are they,
It may be, living yet beneath the sunlight,
Or are they dead and in the house of Hades ? '

Then said to him the swineherd, master man :
' In truth then, stranger, will I tell thee frankly.
Laertes liveth still, but ever prays
To Zeus, that there at home the life may waste
Out of his limbs. For wondrously he mourns
For his lost son, and for his wife, wise lady,
Whose dying was the greatest blow to him,
And brought him to old age before his time.
'Twas out of sorrow for her glorious son
She died—a death most grievous, such as I
Pray none may die who dwells here as a friend

To me and does me kindness ! While she lived
Though in great sorrow, 'twas a joy to me
To ask for news of her. For she herself
Had brought me up with long-robed Ctímene,
Her noble daughter and her latest born.
With her was I brought up ; indeed her mother
Held me in honour almost like her own.
But when we both came to the prime of youth,
That longed-for age, they married her in Same
And got a great bride-price ; but me my lady
Clad in a cloak and tunic, right good clothes,
And gave me sandals for my feet, and sent me
Out here on the estate ; but all the more
She loved me in her heart. And now I lack
All this ; and yet for me the blesséd gods
Prosper my handiwork, whereat I bide.
Therefrom have I had meat and drink, and given
To worthy guests. Yet from my lady I
May hear naught gracious, neither word nor deed,
For on the house a plague has fallen, a plague
Of wanton men. Yet servants greatly long
To talk before their mistress, and to learn
Of what goes on, and eat and drink, and then
To carry off some trifle to the farm,
Such things as always warm a servant's heart.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Why, herd Eumæus, what a child thou wert,
So far to wander from thy home and parents !
But come, declare me this, and tell me truly.
Was there a sack of some broad-streeted city,
Wherein thy sire and lady mother dwelt ?
Or out alone among the sheep and cattle
I did foemen light on thee, and ship thee off
And carry thee for sale to this man's house,
And did he pay a goodly price for thee ? '

Then the swineherd, that master man, replied :
‘ Since thou dost ask and question me of this,
List now in silence, sir ; make merry, sit
And drink thy wine. These nights are wondrous long.
There is a time to sleep ; a time there is
To take delight in tales : thou needest not
Lie down too soon : even excess of sleep
Is an annoy. But for the rest, let him
Whose heart is so inclined go forth and sleep,
And take his meal at dawn, and then go follow
Our master’s pigs. But in the hut we two
Will drink and feast and cheer ourselves, recalling
Each other’s grievous pains ; for e’en in woes
Looked back upon a man can take delight,
Whoe’er has suffered much and wandered much.
But I will tell thee this, concerning which
Thou dost inquire and ask me.

‘ There is an isle called Syria—thou belike
Hast heard thereof—beyond Ortygia,
Where are the turning-places of the sun.
’Tis not so thickly settled, but it is
A good land, rich in herds and flocks, and full
Of corn and wine. There famine never comes
Upon the land, nor hateful sickness either
Falls on unhappy humankind ; but when
The tribes of men grow old throughout the city,
Then comes Apollo of the silver bow
With Artemis, and with his gentle darts
Assails and slays them. In that isle there are
Two towns, and all the land is shared between them ;
And over both my father ruled as king,
Called Ctesius, the son of Ormenus,
A man like the immortals.

‘ Thither Phoenicians, famous seamen, came,
Rapacious rascals, bringing countless trinkets

In their black ship. Now in my father's house
Was a Phœnician woman tall and fair,
And skilled in noble handiwork ; and her
Her wily countrymen beguiled. And first
As she was washing garments, one of them
Lay with her by the hollow ship in love,
Which thing beguiles the mind of womanfolk,
However one be honest. Then he asked her
Her name and whence she came, and she at once
Showed him my father's lofty house, and said :

“ From Sidon, rich in bronze, I claim to be,
The child of Arybas, of flowing wealth.
But Taphian pirates made a snatch at me
As I was coming from the fields, and bore me
Away and sold me here in this man's house,
Who paid a goodly price for me.”

‘ Then said he who had lain with her in secret :
“ Say, wilt thou now come home again with us,
To see the tall house where thy parents dwell,
Ay, see them too ? For truly they are still
Alive and counted wealthy.”

‘ Thereon the woman answered him and said :
“ That too might be ; if ye would pledge me, seamen,
An oath that ye will bring me safely home.”

‘ So said she, and thereto they all took oath,
E'en as she bade ; and when they had sworn and made
An end of swearing, then she spake again :

“ Now silence ! and let no one of your fellows
Accost me if he meets me in the street
Or haply at the well ; lest someone go
And tell the old man in his house, and he
Suspect and bind me in hard bonds and plan
Destruction for you. Keep my words in mind,
And hurry on the barter of your freight,
And when your ship is laden full of goods,

Then have a message sent to me at once
Up to the house ; for I will also bring
Whatever gold I can lay hands upon.
Ay, one more thing there is that I would gladly
Give for my passage. In the palace is
My master's little boy, whose nurse I am,
O such a knowing child ! who is always running
Out and about with me ; him would I bring
On board, and he should fetch you a big price
Where'er ye sell him among foreign folk."

' With that she went her way to the fine house.
And they abode among us one full year,
Getting much wealth into their hollow ship.
But when its hull was laden for their going,
Then they sent one to give the woman warning.
Unto my father's house he came, a man
Of guile, who had a golden necklace strung
With amber beads , and while my lady mother
Amid her maids in hall was handling it,
And viewing it and offering him a price,
He made a sign in silence to the woman,
And then departed to the hollow ship.
Thereon she took me by the hand and led me
Forth out of doors. Now in the outer hall
She found the cups and tables of the diners
Who waited on my father. They had gone
Forth to the session and the people's place
Of parley ; and she quickly hid away
And carried off three goblets in her bosom ;
And in my innocence I followed her.
Then the sun set and all the ways grew dark ;
And making haste we reached the famous harbour,
Where the quick ship of the Phœnicians was.
Then they embarked, and put us both on board,
And sailed the water-ways. And Zeus sent us

A favouring wind. So for six days we sailed
By night and day continually ; but when
Zeus, son of Cronos, brought the seventh day,
Then Artemis, the archer, smote the woman,
So that she fell, just as a sea-gull plunges,
Thudding into the hold. They cast her forth
To be the prey of seals and fish ; but I
Was left with stricken heart. And wind and water
Bore them and brought them nigh to Ithaca,
And there Laertes bought me with his wealth.
So fell it that mine eyes beheld this land.'

To him Odysseus, sprung from Zeus, replied :
' Eumæus, deeply hast thou stirred my heart,
By telling me this tale, ay, all the pains
Thou hast endured. And yet, to tell the truth,
Zeus hath set good for thee beside the evil,
Since after all thy labours thou hast reached
A gentleman's abode, who gives thee meat
And drink out of his thoughtfulness ; and thou
Art living well ; but I have lighted here
A-wandering through many towns of men.'

In this way they were talking with each other ;
Then down to sleep they lay, a little while,
Not long, for soon came Dawn of the fair throne.

But making land, those with Telemachus
Struck sail, and took the mast down hastily,
And rowed her on to anchorage, and dropped
The mooring-stones, and made the hawsers fast.
And forth they stepped themselves upon the beach,
And got a meal and mixed the sparkling wine,
And when they had had their fill of meat and drink,
First spake among them wise Telemachus :

' Now row ye on the black ship to the city,
But I will to the fields and to the herdsmen,
And having seen my lands will come at evening

Unto the city. I shall set before you
Your wages for the journey in the morning,
Meat and sweet wine to drink, a right good feast.'

Then said to him godlike Theoclymenus :
' And where am I to go, dear boy ? Whose house
Of those who rule in rocky Ithaca
Am I to make for ? Shall I get me straight
Unto thy mother's house and thine ? '

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' If things were otherwise, I would say to thee,
" Go to our house ", for not at all it lacks
The means of entertaining ; but for thee
It might be worse, since I shall be away,
Nor will my mother see thee. Seldom she
Appears before the suitors in the house ;
But in an upper room apart from them
Weaves at her loom. Yet I will name to thee
Another man, to whom thou mightest go,
Eurymachus, wise Polybus' fine son,
On whom the men of Ithaca now look
As though he were a god. For he is far
The best of them, and is most keen to wed
My mother, and to have Odysseus' honours.
But Zeus who dwells in the Olympian sky
Knows this thing too, if he will bring to pass
The day of evil for them ere such marriage.'

He spake ; and on the right a bird flew forth,
A hawk, Apollo's rapid messenger.
His talons held a dove, and he was plucking
And letting fall her feathers to the ground
Mid way between the galley and the prince.
Then from his comrades Theoclymenus
Called him aside and took him by the hand,
And spake and said to him :

' But that a god so willed, Telemachus,

On our right hand this bird had not flown out !

I knew him when I saw him for an omen.

There is no other house in Ithaca

Royal as thine ; ye are supreme for ever.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :

' Ah, stranger, would thy word might be fulfilled !

Then shouldst thou know from me such loving-kindness,

And straightway gifts so many, that whoever

Met thee would call thee blessed.'

Then said he to Peiræus, his true mate :

' Peiræus, son of Clytius, since thou

Of all the friends who went with me to Pylos

Art in all other things most faithful to me,

So now, I pray thee, take this stranger home,

And show him heedful kindness in thy house,

And treat him with regard until I come.'

Peiræus, that fine spearman, made him answer :

' Telemachus, however long thou stayest,

Yet will I entertain this man and he

Shall have no lack of what is due to guests.'

Therewith he went aboard the ship, and bade

His men embark and cast the cables loose.

And straight they boarded her and manned the thwarts.

Telemachus tied on his goodly sandals,

And picked up from the deck his doughty spear

Shod with sharp bronze. The seamen loosed the hawsers,

And shoving off the ship, sailed to the city,

As the dear son of great Odysseus bade them.

But borne upon his feet apace he went

Forward, until he reached the farmstead, where

His countless swine were, and among them slept

The worthy swineherd, loyal to his lords.

BOOK XVI

Meanwhile inside the hut those twain had lit
A fire, Odysseus and the goodly swineherd,
And they at dawn were getting breakfast ready,
And had despatched the herdsmen with the droves
Of swine. And as Telemachus came up,
The loud dogs did not bark, but fawned on him.
Now good Odysseus marked the fawning dogs,
And on his ears the sound of footsteps fell ;
And all at once he spake with wingéd words :

‘Eumæus, I am sure some friend of thine
Or one of thy acquaintance will be coming,
Because the hounds do not give tongue, but fawn
About him, and I hear the sound of footsteps.’

The word had hardly left his lips, when lo,
His own dear son stood in the entrance gate.
Then up the swineherd started in amaze,
And dropped the pitchers wherewith he was busy
Mixing the sparkling wine. He went to meet
His lord, and kissed his face and both his hands
And his fine eyes, and let a big tear fall.
And as a loving father greets his son
Who after nine years comes from some far land,
His only son and well-beloved, for whom
He has endured much sorrow ; even so
The good herd clasped godlike Telemachus,
And kissed him greedily, as one escaped
From death ; and wailing spake with wingéd words :
‘Light of mine eyes, ’tis thou, Telemachus !
I thought that I should never see thee more,
When thou hadst gone to Pylos in thy ship.

But, dear my lad, come in, to glad my heart
With seeing thee, come newly from afar,
Here in my house. For not so oft dost thou
Visit the herdsmen and the farm, but bidest
In town ; it suits thee best no doubt to keep
An eye upon the wasteful throng of suitors.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' So be it, Daddy ! For thy sake am I
Come here, to see thee with mine eyes, and hear
Thee tell me—doth my mother yet abide
At home, or hath another married her
By now, and haply bare of bedding lies
Odysseus' bed, and foul with spider-webs ? '

Then the swineherd, masterful man, replied :
' Ay, she abides indeed with steadfast heart
There in thy house, but ever wearily
'The nights and days wane for her as she weeps.'

With that he took from him the spear of bronze ;
And in he passed and crossed the threshold-stone,
And as he came, his sire Odysseus rose
As to make place for him, but on his part
Telemachus restrained him, and he said :

' Be seated, stranger. We shall find a seat
Elsewhere within our farmstead. There is one
Here, who will set one for us.'

At that Odysseus went back to his seat,
But for Telemachus the swineherd strewed
Beneath, green brush-wood, and a fleece above,
And there Odysseus' dear son took his seat.
Thereon the swineherd set beside them platters
Of roasted meats, which they had left from dinner
The day before, and quickly piled up bread
In trays by them, and mixed the honeyed wine
In a bowl of ivy wood, and then himself
Sate opposite divine Odysseus. So

They reached their hands to the good fare before them.
But when they had had their fill of meat and drink.
Telemachus addressed the goodly swineherd :

‘ Whence came this stranger to thee, Daddy ? how
Did seamen carry him to Ithaca ?
Who said they that they were ? for in no wise
Can I suppose that he came here afoot.’

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
‘ Yea now, son, I will tell thee all the truth.
By birth he claims to be from spacious Crete,
And says that in his wanderings he hath whirled
Through many towns of men ; for so the god
Has spun his thread. Now hath he run away
Out of a ship of the Thesprotian folk,
And reached my farmstead ; and I will commit him
Into thy hand ; do with him as thou wilt ;
He doth profess himself thy suppliant.’

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
‘ Eumæus, what thou sayest stings my heart.
For how am I to welcome in my house
This stranger ? I am inexperienced,
And cannot trust my hands yet to repel
A man who does me hurt without a cause.
As for my mother, she is swayed by doubts
Two ways, whether to bide with me at home
And keep the house, holding in reverence
Her husband’s bed and what the people say,
Or to go off at once with whoso is
The best of the Achæans wooing her
Within the house, and brings most bridal-gifts.
But truly for this guest, since he hath come .
Unto thy house, will I find clothes for him,
Tunic and cloak, good raiment, and will give him
A two-edged sword and sandals for his feet ;
And send him wheresoe’er his heart and spirit

Bid him. Or if thou wilt, do thou detain him
Here at the farmstead, and look after him,
And I will send here clothes and all his food,
Lest he should eat thee and thy mates all up.
But thither 'mid the company of suitors
I would not let him go, for they are flown
With insolence and pride, for fear they mock him
And I be sorely vexed. 'Tis very hard
For one man to do aught against a crowd,
However stout he be ; they are far stronger.'

Then said Odysseus, sore-tried goodly man :
' Friend, since it is my right to answer thee,
Indeed it rends my heart to hear thee say
What wantonness the suitors plan within
Thy halls, despite so good a man as thee !
Say, art thou willing to endure oppression ?
Or do the people through the country hate thee,
Obeying some god's voice ? Or hast thou cause
To blame thy brothers, in whose fighting strength
A man confides, though a great feud arise ?
O would I felt like this and yet were young
As thou, and either were a son begotten
Of good Odysseus' loins, or he himself !
'Then straightway might a stranger strike my head off,
If to them all I did not prove a curse !
But if they overwhelmed me in their numbers,
Being one man alone, well, I would rather
Be done to death in mine own halls, than watch
These scandals going on—guests rudely handled ;
Men hauling hand-maids through a decent house
In shameless fashion ; wine drawn wastefully ;
Men eating up my bread at will unheeding—
And all a limitless, unending business.'

And wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Yea frankly, stranger, will I tell thee all.

The people as a whole bear me no grudge
Nor hate, nor have I cause to blame my brothers,
In whose support in fight a man confides,
E'en if a great feud rise. For in this sort
Hath Cronos' son made ours a single stock.
Arceisius begot one only son
Laertes, and of him only one son,
Odysseus, was begotten, and Odysseus
Begot but me, and left me in his halls,
And had no joy of me. So now it is,
The house is full of countless foes ; for all
The chiefs who rule the isles—Dulichium,
And Same, and Zacynthus of the woods—
And all who reign in rocky Ithaca,
These woo my mother and lay waste my house.
And she doth not refuse the hateful marriage,
Nor yet can make an end ; and they with feasting
Consume my house, and soon will break me too.
But on the gods' knees all these issues lie.
But go thou quickly, Daddy ! bear the news
To true Penelope—she hath me safe,
And I am come from Pylos. As for me
I will stay here, and hither come thou back,
When thou hast told thy tale to her alone.
But let none other of the Achæans hear it,
For there be many who plot evil for me.'

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
'I know, I heed, I understand thy bidding.
But come, declare me this, and tell me plainly.
Am I to go upon the self-same errand
To poor Laertes too ? who till but now
In spite of all his sorrow for Odysseus,
Would oversee the field-work, and would eat
And drink at home, whene'er his spirit bade him,
Among the slaves ; but ever since thou wentest

To Pylos in thy ship, no more, they say,
Hath drunk and eaten as he did before,
Nor overseen the field-work, but sits grieving
With cries and groans, and all his flesh is wasted
From off his bones.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' 'Tis sadder so ! yet will we let him be,
For all our grief. For if in any wise
Mortals might have their way by merely wishing,
First would we choose the day that sees my father
Come home again. No, no, come thou back here,
And roam not through the fields to seek Laertes.
But bid my mother send the stewardess,
Her servant, with all speed and secretly,
For she might bear the news to the old man.'

With that he roused the swineherd, who took up
His sandals in his hand and tied them on,
And set out for the city. Now Athene
Marked when Eumæus swineherd left the farm.
And near she drew, in semblance of a woman,
Comely and tall and skilled in noble works.
Over against the cottage door she stood,
Revealed unto Odysseus, but his son
Saw nothing nor perceived her there before him ;
For nowise do the gods appear clear-seen
To all men. But Odysseus and the dogs
Beheld her, and the dogs did not give tongue,
But whined and slunk in fear across the steading,
To the far side. Then with her brows she nodded,
And good Odysseus marked it ; and he went
Forth from the hall and passed the great yard-wall,
And stood before her ; and Athene spake :

' Son of Laertes, subtle child of Zeus,
Odysseus, now the time has come to say
Thy saying to thy son, and hide it not ;

That ye two, having plotted for the suitors
Their death and doom, may reach the famous city.
Nor shall I too be long away from you :
I hunger for the battle.'

With that Athene touched him with her wand
Of gold ; and first she wrapped about his breast
A fair-washed cloak and tunic, and increased
His stature and his bloom. Once more he grew
Dark-hued ; his cheeks filled out, and round his chin
Spread a black beard. Then having wrought all this,
Again she went her way. Inside the hut
Odysseus walked. His own son was amazed,
And terror-stricken turned away his eyes,
Lest it should be a god. And then he found
His voice, and said to him with wingéd words :

'Of other sort, sir, seemest thou to me
Now, than a moment since ; and other clothes
Thou hast ; thy colour too is not the same.
Needs must thou be one of the gods, who hold
Wide heaven. Nay then, be kind, that we may give thee
Well-pleasing sacrifice and golden gifts
Of finest work ; but have compassion on us.'

Thereon Odysseus, sore-tried goodly man,
Replied to him : 'Look thou, no god am I.
Why dost thou liken me to the immortals ?
Nay, but I am thy father, for whose sake
Thou sufferest with groaning many griefs,
And dost endure the violence of men.'

Therewith he kissed his son, and from his cheeks
A tear fell on the ground, though heretofore
He had repressed them straitly. Nonetheless,
Not yet believing that it was his father,
Telemachus made answer in his turn :

'No, thou art not Odysseus, not my father !
But 'tis some god beguiles me, that I may

Lament the more with ever greater grief.
For nowise could a mortal man devise this
By his own wit, except there came to him
Some god indeed, and lightly at his pleasure
Made him or young or old. For why, but now,
Thou wert an old man in unseemly rags,
But now art like the gods who hold wide heaven.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Telemachus, it fits thee not to marvel
So greatly that thy father is come home,
Or be amazed. For never, be thou sure,
Will any other Odysseus hither come !
But here am I, e'en I, just as thou seest,
Come after sufferings and much wandering
'To mine own country in the twentieth year.
But this, I tell thee, is Athene's work,
Who drives the spoil. 'Tis she who maketh me
Whate'er she likes—'tis possible for her—
One moment like a beggar, and anon
Like a young man in gallant raiment clad.
'Tis easy for the gods, who hold wide heaven,
To glorify a mortal or abase him.'

So saying, down he sate. Telemachus
Flinging his arms about his noble father
Wept and shed tears ; and in the hearts of both
Were stirred the springs of grief. Insistently
They wailed aloud, like eagles of the sea,
Or hook-clawed vultures, when the country folk
Have carried off their young ere they were fledged ;
So piteous from their eyes the tear-drops fell.
And now the sun had set upon their weeping,
But that Telemachus said suddenly
Unto his father :

' My father, in what kind of ship did sailors
Convey thee here at last to Ithaca ?

Who said they that they were ? For in no wise
Can I suppose thou camest here afoot.'

And steadfast good Odysseus answered him :
' Lo, I will tell thee all the truth, my son.
Phæacians, famous sailors, brought me hither,
And they find convoy too for other men,
Whoever comes to them. And as I slept
On the swift ship, they brought me o'er the sea
And landed me in Ithaca : fine gifts,
Bronze, and abundant gold, and woven raiment,
They gave me ; and these treasures are laid up
By the gods' grace, in caves. And now am I
Come hither at Athene's instigation,
That we may plan the slaying of our foes.
Come, count me out the suitors, tell their tale ;
That I may know how many and which men
They are, and commune with my own brave heart,
And tell myself whether we two are able
Without allies to hold our own against them
Alone, or should seek others' help as well.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' In truth, my father, I have ever heard
Of thy great fame, and how thou wast a fighter
Strong-handed, wise in counsel ; but this thing
Thou sayest is too great. I am amazed.
It cannot be that two men should do battle
With many men and mighty ! of the suitors
Not merely ten there are, nor yet twice ten,
But many more. Here will I give thee now
Their number. From Dulichium there are
Fifty and two picked youths, and with them go
Six servants ; and from Same twenty-four ;
And from Zacynthus there are twenty youths
Of the Achæans ; and from Ithaca
Itself, twelve men and all the best. Medon

The herald, and the holy bard are with them ;
Two servants also, skilled in carving meats.
If we face all of these indoors, I fear
Lest black and bitter for us be thy coming
To punish their excesses. Nay, do thou
Consider—canst thou think of any helper,
One that would aid us two with all his heart ? ’

Then steadfast good Odysseus answered him :
‘ Well, I will tell thee then ; and do thou heed
And hearken ; and consider if Athene
And Father Zeus suffice for us, or shall
I cast about to find some other helper ? ’

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
‘ I grant thee, noble are the two defenders
Thou namest, though among the clouds on high
Their seat is set, and they bear rule alike
Over all men and the immortal gods.’

And steadfast good Odysseus answered him :
‘ Not long, I say, will those two keep aloof
From the great fray, whenever in my halls
Is tried the strength of battle ’twixt the suitors
And us. But do thou now at streak of dawn
Go home and mingle with the haughty suitors.
For me, the swineherd will conduct me later
In likeness of a woful, aged beggar
Into the town. And if they treat me badly
Inside the house, still let thy heart within thee
Be hardened, while I suffer evil usage ;
Yea, if they drag me by the feet along
The house and throw me out, or cast at me
And smite me, still look on and hold thy peace.
Thou mayst indeed with gentle words dissuade them
And bid them cease their folly ; but they will
Not hearken, for their day of doom is on them.
And I will tell thee something else ; do thou

Lay it to heart. When purposive Athene
Suggests it to me, I will nod at thee,
And at the signal do thou carry off
All the war weapons lying in the halls,
And hide them, every one, in the safe place
Of the tall treasure-room. And when the suitors
Miss them and ask thee of them, then do thou
Beguile them with persuasive words, and say :

“ Out of the smoke I laid them by, because
No longer were they like those that of old
Odysseus left, when he went forth to Troy ;
But all befouled, to such extent had come
The breath of fire upon them. And besides
Cronion filled me with this graver fear,
Lest being hot with wine ye raise up strife
Among you, and do hurt to one another,
And shame the wooing and the feast ; because
Steel of itself allures a man to it.”

‘ But for us two alone leave thou behind
Two swords, two spears, two bucklers of ox-hide
To grasp , that we may make a rush and seize them,
While Pallas, ay, and Zeus the counsellor
Befool the suitors. And yet one thing else
Will I tell thee ; now lay it well to heart.
If thou in truth art mine, and of our blood,
Let no one hear Odysseus is at home !
Nor let Laertes know it, nor the swineherd,
Nor any servant, nor Penelope
Herself ; but thou and I alone will prove
The conduct of the women, and moreover
Will make essay of some men-servants too,
And see who heartily reveres and fears us,
And who regards us not, and holds thee light,
For all thy worth.’

Then his renowned son answered him and said :

'I think that thou shalt surely know my spirit
When the time comes, my father ; fickleness
Of purpose hath no hold of me. And yet,
Because I do not think thy plan will prove
A gain to us, I urge thee to reflect.
'Twill take thee a long time, waste time, to go
Testing each man and visiting the farms ;
While in thy halls these men at ease eat up
Thy wealth immoderately, and make no sparing.
Yet for the women, yes, I do advise thee
To learn which be they that dishonour thee,
And which are innocent ; but of the men
'Throughout the farms, I would not we make trial,
But deal with that thereafter—if thou hast
Seen some sure sign from ægis-bearing Zeus.'

So they two held debate with one another.
Meantime the sturdy ship that brought from Pylos
Telemachus and all his men, put in
To Ithaca. And entering the deep harbour,
Up on the shore the crew dragged the black ship ;
While gallant henchmen bare their weapons off,
And took the fair gifts straight to Clyti^{us}' house.
'Then to Odysseus' home they sent a herald
Ahead, to tell discreet Penelope,
How that Telemachus had reached the farm
And sent the ship to sail on to the town,
Lest she, the stately queen, should be afraid
And let the round tears fall. So the two met,
This herald and the goodly swineherd, come
On the same errand, to inform the lady.
Now when they reached the godlike king's abode,
The herald called amid the handmaids saying :
'Thy son, O queen, hath even now come back !'

But nigh Penelope the swineherd came,
And told her all that her own son had bidden ;

And when he had delivered all his charge,
Back to the pigs he went his way, and left
The courtyard and the hall.

But troubled and disheartened were the suitors,
And past the great wall of the yard they walked
Out from the hall, and there before the gates
Sate down. And of them then Eurymachus,
The son of Polybus, was first to speak :

‘ My friends, this is a desperate piece of work
Telemachus hath carried through, this journey.
And in our hearts we said he could not do it.
Come, let us launch a black ship, ay, our best,
And fill her with a crew of seamen rowers
To haste and call the ambush home at once.’

Scarce had he spoken, when Amphinomus
Turned in his place ; and there in the deep harbour
He saw a ship, and men were furling sails
And had their oars in hand. So merrily
He laughed aloud, and said unto his friends :

‘ No more of sending any messages,
For here they are in port ! Maybe some god
Told them of this, or they themselves perceived
The prince’s ship go by, and could not catch her.’

So said he, and they started up and went
To the seashore. Swiftly the crew drew up
The black ship on the beach, and gallant squires
Bare forth their weapons. But the suitors went
As one man to the meeting, suffering none
To sit among them, neither young nor old :
And then Antinous, Eupeithes’ son,
Addressed them :

‘ Why, how the gods have saved this man from harm !
Day after day along the windy heights
Sate our look-outs, watch ever following watch,
And never at the set of sun we slept

One night ashore, but cruising the high seas
In our swift ship we waited for bright dawn,
Lying in ambush for Telemachus,
That we might take and slay him without fail :
And all the while some god has brought him home !
Well, here then let us plan a bitter death
For him : we must not let Telemachus
Slip from our hands ; for while he lives, I wot,
Our task will never prosper. For he is
Himself in counsel and perception shrewd,
And folk no longer wholly favour us.
Come now, before he gathers the Achæans
To moot ; for he will not be slow to act,
I tell you, but will be exceeding angry,
And there he will stand up and tell them all
How we made plans to kill him out of hand
And missed him ! They will not be pleased to hear
Of our dark doings. Have a care then, lest
They do us hurt, and drive us forth from home,
And we go faring among strangers. No,
Let us strike first, and catch him in the field
Far from the city, or upon the road ;
And let us keep his substance and possessions
Ourselves, and share them fairly, but make over
Unto his mother and to whoso weds her,
This house to keep. Howbeit if this plan
Pleases you not, and ye prefer that he
Should live and hold his fathers' heritage,
Then let us gather here no more, to eat
His store of pleasant things ; but let each man
Seek her and woo her with his bridal gifts
From his own house. Then she would wed the man
Who gives the most, and comes her fated mate.'

So said he, and dead silence fell on all.
And then Amphinomus, the famous son

Of Nisus prince, son of Aretias,
Among them spake. Now he it was who led
The suitors from the land of corn and grass,
Dulichium ; and more than all the rest
His words were pleasant to Penelope,
For he was of an understanding mind.
With good intent he made his speech to them :

‘ For my part, friends, I would not vote to kill
Telemachus : to slay the stock of kings
Is dreadful. No, let us first ask the will
Of heaven. If great Zeus’ oracles approve,
Then I myself will slay him and will urge
The others all to it ; but if the gods
Turn us therefrom, I say to you “ refrain ” .’

So spake Amphinomus, and what he said
Was pleasing to them ; whereupon at once
They rose, and went into Odysseus’ house,
And entering, on the polished seats sate down.

Then wise Penelope had a new thought—
To show herself unto the suitors, proud
In insolence. For she had heard they meant
To kill her son in hall, because Medon
The herald, who had heard their plots, had told her.
So with her handmaids to the hall she went.
But when that star of women reached the suitors,
By the main stay of the strong roof she stood,
Holding her glistening veil before her face,
And chid Antinous, and said to him :

‘ Antinous, thou insolent dark plotter !
And yet men say that thou throughout the land
Of Ithaca art first among thy peers
In plan and speech. No, no, thou art not that !
Why, madman, art thou weaving death and fate
Against Telemachus, nor payest heed
To suppliants who have Zeus for witness ? Nay,

'Tis wicked to plot hurt one for another !
Dost thou not know how once thy father fled
Hither in terror of the people ? Ay,
They were exceeding wroth with him, for he
Had joined the Taphian pirates, and done wrong
To the Thesprotians who were leagued with us.
So they were bent on slaying him and taking
His life by force, and utterly devouring
His great and pleasant substance ; but Odysseus
Stayed them and held them back, for all their passion.
His is the house that now thou eatest up
Without atonement, and wouldst wed his wife
And slay his son ! Thou troublest me greatly :
I charge thee cease, and bid the others cease.'

Then answer to her made Eurymachus,
The son of Polybus : ' carius' daughter,
Be of good cheer, Penelope the wise,
And do not let these things distress thy heart !
The man is not nor shall be nor be born
Who shall lay hands upon Telemachus
Thy son, while I am living and behold
The sunlight upon earth. Lo, I will tell thee,
And of a truth shall it be so fulfilled.
My spear shall drink his black blood very soon ;
Because in truth Odysseus, city-sacker,
Hath often set me too upon his knees,
And put the roast meat in my hands, and held
The red wine to my lips. Of all men therefore
Far dearest is Telemachus to me.
I bid him have no fear of death, at least
Not from the suitors' hands ; but from the gods
'Tis not to be escaped.'

So said he for her comfort, but he was
Himself devising to destroy her son.

Then going up to her bright upper room,

She mourned Odysseus, her dear lord, until
Athenē cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

Now in the evening the good swineherd came
Back to Odysseus and his son ; and they
Had slain a yearling boar, and standing up
Were making supper ready. Then Athenē
Came close beside Laertes' son Odysseus,
And smote him with her wand, and once again
Made an old man of him ; and in mean rags
She clothed his body, lest the swineherd should
See him and recognize him, and might go
And tell the news to wise Penelope,
And not keep fast the secret in his heart.

Then first Telemachus addressed him saying :
' Here art thou, good Eumæus ! Well, what news
Is there in town ? Have the proud suitors come
In from their ambuscade, or are they there
Still watching for me on my homeward way ? '

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
' No mind had I to go down through the city
Asking such questions, but my instinct was
To do mine errand and come home again
As soon as might be ; but from thy companions
There joined me a swift courier, a herald,
And to thy mother he first brought the news.
Ay, one thing else I know, for with mine eyes
I saw it. When I was above the city,
Where is the hill of Hermes, on my way,
I saw a swift ship making for our harbour,
With many men in her, and she was laden
With shields and double-headed spears. I guessed
It was the suitors, but I do not know.'

At that the mighty prince Telemachus
Smiled, and he shot a glance towards his father,
But shunned the swineherd's eye.

Now when their work was done, and they had made
The supper ready, then they fell to feasting,
And lacked for nothing at the feast they shared ;
And when they wanted no more food or drink,
They thought of rest, and took the gift of sleep.

BOOK XVII

At the first flush of rosy-fingered Dawn,
Telemachus, divine Odysseus' son,
Tied his bright sandals on his feet, and took
His mighty spear, that in his hand lay tight,
To hasten to the city ; and he spake
Unto his swineherd, saying :

‘ Now, Daddy, for the city am I bound
To let my mother see me. For I know
That till she sees me in the life, she will not
Forgo her bitter wail and tearful sobbing.
But upon thee I lay this charge : bring thou
This wretched stranger to the city, that
There he may beg his food, and whoso will
May give him crust of bread or cup of water.
But as for me, heart-troubled as I am,
I simply cannot take all men upon me,
And if the stranger is aggrieved thereat,
The worse for him. For I must speak the truth.’

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ Friend, I myself am certainly not anxious
To be left here ! ’Tis better for a beggar
To beg a meal in town than in the country ;
And whoso will shall give it me. For I am
Too old a man to tarry at the farmstead,
So as to have to heed at every turn
An overseer’s biddings. Go thy way,
And this man, whom thou orderest, shall bring me,
As soon as I have warmed me at the fire
And heat is in the sun ; these clothes of mine
Are mighty sorry things. I am afraid

The morning frost may freeze me, and ye say
The city is a long way off.'

So said he, and Telemachus sped through
The farmstead with quick stride, and for the suitors
Was sowing seeds of evil. Now when he
Came to the stately house, he set his spear
By a tall pillar in its place, and then
Himself went in and crossed the threshold stone.

And far the first to see him was the nurse
Named Eurycleia. She was spreading fleeces
Upon the rich-wrought chairs ; and straight to him
She came, and burst out weeping ; and around
The other maids of steadfast-souled Odysseus
Crowded, and kissed his head and neck in welcome.

Then from her room came wise Penelope,
Like Artemis or golden Aphrodite,
And breaking into tears, she threw her arms
Around her well-loved son, and kissed his face
And his fine eyes ; and then in lamentation
She spake to him in wingéd words :

'Light of mine eyes, 'tis thou, Telemachus !
I thought that I should never see thee more
When thou hadst sailed to Pylos, secretly
Against my wish, to hear of thy dear father.
Come, tell me then what sight of him thou hadst.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
'Mother o' mine, do not, I pray thee, wake
Laments, nor rouse the heart within me, seeing
I have but now escaped the plunge to death.
But bathe, and clothe thyself in spotless raiment,
And go upstairs with thine attendant women,
And vow to offer winning hecatombs
To all the gods, if haply Zeus may bring
Avenging deeds to pass. But I will go
To the assembly, that I may bid here

A guest, who came with me along from Pylos.
Him I sent forward with my godlike comrades,
And bade Piræus take him home, and use him
Kindly and honourably until I came.'

So spake he, but her answer found no wings.
She washed herself, and took clean raiment to her,
And vowed to all the gods that she would offer
Effective hecatombs, in hope that Zeus
Would some day bring avenging deeds to pass.

Then through the hall strode forth Telemachus,
With spear in hand, and two swift hounds went with him.
A wondrous grace on him Athene shed,
And all the people marvelled as he came.
And round about him pressed the lordly suitors,
Speaking him fair, but deep within their hearts
They brooded evil. But he slipped away
From their main company, and went and sate
Where Mentor, Antiphus and Halitherses,
Friends of his father's house from the beginning,
Were seated, and they asked him all his doings.
Now nigh to them Piræus, that good spearman,
Came, leading to the assembly through the city
The stranger ; and Telemachus remained
Not long aloof from him, but went up to him ;
And then Piræus was the first to speak :

' Bid women to my house, Telemachus,
At once, that I may send to thee the gifts
Which Menelaus gave thee.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' We do not know, Piræus, what shall be
The issue of all this. If the proud suitors
Should slay me in the halls by treachery
And share all my inheritance, I would
That thou, rather than one of them, shouldst keep
And profit by the gifts. But if I sow

'The seeds of doom and ruin for the suitors,
Then do thou bring them gladly to my house,
And gladly I shall take them.'

With that he led the travel-weary stranger
Homeward. Now when they reached the stately house,
They dropped their cloaks upon the chairs and settles,
And went into the polished baths and bathed.
And when the maids had bathed and rubbed them down
With oil of olive, and had wrapped them round
With fleecy cloaks and tunics, forth they came
Out from the baths, and took their seats on chairs.
Then a maid brought them water for their hands,
And poured it from a fine gold jug for washing
Over a silver basin, and drew up
Near them a polished board ; and a grave dame
Brought and set bread, and added many dainties,
Providing generously of what she had.
But opposite Telemachus, beside
A pillar of the house, his mother sate ;
Against a chair she leaned, and she was spinning
Fine threads of yarn. So they put forth their hands
Unto the good cheer lying ready for them.
And when they had had their fill of drink and food,
'The wise Penelope spake first among them :

' I think, Telemachus, I will go up
Unto my room, and lay me on my bed,
Which is become for me a bed of sorrow,
Continually watered by my tears,
Since with the sons of Atreus went Odysseus
To Troy ; and thou, thou art so hard of heart
As not to tell me plainly—now, before
The haughty suitors come into the house—
About thy father's coming, if perchance
Thou heardest aught thereof ! '

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :

‘ Yea, mother, I will tell thee all the truth.
To Pylos, and that shepherd of the people,
Nestor, we went ; and in his lofty house
He took me in, and gave me kindly welcome,
As might a father his own son, new come
After long years from foreign lands ; so he
Cared for me kindly, with his glorious sons.
But of Odysseus of the steadfast heart,
Whether alive or dead, he said that he
Had had no word from any man on earth.
But me he sent, with steeds and jointed car,
To Menelaus, that great spearman, son
Of Atreus. There beheld I Argive Helen,
On whose account the Argives and the Trojans
Suffered so sorely by the will of heaven.
Then Menelaus of the war-cry asked me
At once why I had come to goodly Sparta,
Upon what quest. I told him all the truth.
Then he made answer, saying :

‘ “ To think that in a valiant hero’s bed
They, cowards that they are, aspired to lie !
E’en as when in a mighty lion’s lair
A hind has bedded her new fawns unweaned,
And roams the mountain slopes and grassy vales
In search of food, and then the lion comes
Home to his lair, and looses on the twain
An ugly death ; so shall Odysseus loose
An ugly death upon the suitors. Would,
O Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo,
That in such strength as when he rose up once
In stately Lesbos for a wrestling match
And threw Philomeleides mightily,
And all the Greeks rejoiced—would that Odysseus,
As then he was, might come upon the suitors !
Then swift should be the doom of all of them

And harsh their mating ! But in this that thou
Dost ask and seek of me, I will not swerve
To speak of other things, nor will I cheat thee,
But whatsoe'er the old man of the sea,
Who cannot lie, declared to me, thereof
I will not hide nor keep one word from thee.

“ He said he had seen Odysseus in an island,
Sore sorrowing in the nymph Calypso's house,
Who keeps him there by force. He cannot come
To his own land, for neither ships with oars
Hath he at hand, nor crew who might convey him
Upon his way across the broad sea-backs.”

‘ So Menelaus spake, the son of Atreus,
That famous spearman. So, since I had made
An end, I set out home, and the immortals
Gave me a favouring wind, and brought me quickly
To my dear native land.’

His words awoke the heart within her breast.
But in their midst godlike Theoclymenus
Spake also : ‘ Honoured lady of Odysseus,
Laertes' son, thy son hath no clear knowledge.
But do thou mark my words ; for most exactly
I will foretell to thee, and hide no thing.
Above all gods be Zeus my witness now,
And this the friendly table, this the hearth
Of good Odysseus, whereto I am come—
How that in very truth Odysseus is
E'en now in his own land, active or quiet :
He hears of these ill deeds, and soweth evil
For all the suitors. Such a bird of omen
I noted as I sate on the ship's thwarts,
And I announced it to Telemachus.’

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
‘ Ah, stranger, would thy word might be fulfilled !
Then shouldst thou know from me such loving-kindness

And straightway gifts so many, that whoe'er
Met thee, would call thee blesséd !'

In this way then they talked with one another.
Meanwhile before the palace of Odysseus,
The suitors in their arrogance of heart
Amused themselves with throwing quoits and spears
In a flat place, as was their use before.

But when at length it was the hour for dinner,
And from the fields on all sides came the flocks,
Led by the shepherds who were wont to lead them,
Then spake Medon to them (of all the heralds
He pleased them most, and used to join their feast) :

' Now, lads, that ye have all amused yourselves
With games, come to the house, that we may make
A banquet ready ; for 'tis no bad thing
To take one's meal in season.'

So said he, and they hearkened to his word,
And rose and went their way ; and when they reached
The well-set house, they laid aside their cloaks
Upon the chairs and seats ; and fell to slaying
Big sheep and fattened goats, yea, fatling boars
And of the herd a heifer, and so made
A banquet ready.

Meanwhile Odysseus and the goodly swineherd
Set about going from the farm to town ;
And first the swineherd spake, that master man :

' Well, friend, I see that thou art keen on going
To town to-day, just as my master ordered
(Though I myself would rather see thee left
Here to protect the farmstead ; but I fear
And reverence him, lest afterwards he chide me ;
And hard are the rebukes of masters) ; come,
Let us be off ; much of the day is gone ;
And soon thou'lt find it colder toward evening.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :

‘ I see, I heed, I understand thy bidding.
Yes, let us go, and do thou be my guide
Right through ; and if thou hast at hand a staff
Cut ready, give it me to lean on, for
Truly ve said the way was slippery.’

Therewith he flung his wallet round his shoulders,
A mean thing, full of holes, slung by a cord.
Eumæus gave him too a staff he liked.
Then forth they fared, but to protect the farmstead
The dogs and herdsmen stayed behind. And so
The swineherd led his master to the city,
In likeness of an old and wotul beggar
Leaning upon a staff and foully clad.

Now as they walked along the rugged path,
They neared the city, and had reached the fountain
Caught in a cistern, flowing freely, whence
The townsfolk drew their water. It was built
By Ithacus and Neritus and Polycetor ;
And round it circle-wise there was a grove
Of water-loving poplars. From a rock
Above the cool stream leapt, and on the top
Was built an altar to the nymphs, whereat
All passers-by made offerings. Here it was
Melanthius met them, son of Dolius,
Driving his goats, the best in all the herds,
To make the suitors’ dinner ; and with him
He had two herdsmen. And on seeing them,
He cullèd to them and broke out in abuse
Fearsome and gross, and stirred Odysseus’ heart :

‘ Ha ! now if ever, rogue is leading rogue !
Always the god brings like and like together !
Pray, miserable swineherd, whither art thou
Leading this swinish beggar, for a nuisance
And kill-joy at the feast ? He is a man
To stand and scratch his back on many door-posts,

And beg for scraps—none of your swords or cauldrons !
O wouldst thou give him me, to watch my farm,
To sweep the pens out, and to carry fodder
To the young goats, why then he might drink whey
And get himself a good stout thigh ! But now
He is only up to mischief, and dislikes
To turn his hand to work, and much prefers
To skulk about the country begging food
For his insatiate belly. I will tell thee ;
And what I say will happen. If he ever
Comes to the palace of divine Odysseus,
The stools will fly from men's hands at his head
And crack in numbers on his ribs, while he
Goes pelted through the house.'

Therewith, as he went past, out of his folly
He kicked Odysseus on the hip, but failed
To shift him from the path. Odysseus stood
Firm fixed, debating if to leap on him
And club him till he died, or swing him up
And smash his head upon the ground. Howbeit
He braced himself to patience, and refrained
Of purpose. But the swineherd, looking straight
Into Melanthius' face, spake in reproach,
And lifting up his hands, prayed earnestly :

' Nymphs of the well, ye maids of Zeus, if e'er
Odysseus burned the thighs of rams or kids
Lapped in rich fat upon your altars, now
Fulfil for me this prayer—that he, e'en he,
May come and some god guide him ! Then should he
Scatter thy impudences utterly,
Which now thou putttest on in arrogance,
For ever loafing round the city, while
Bad shepherds spoil the flocks. '

Then answered him Melanthius of the goats :
' Why, how this ugly-tempered mongrel talks !

Some day I'll ship him in a dark, decked ship
Far off from Ithaca, and he shall bring me
A lot of money. Yes, I would Apollo
With silver bow would smite Telemachus
In hall to-day, or he go down before
The suitors, just as surely as Odysseus
Hath lost far off the day of his return !'

With that he left them moving slowly there,
But he went on and very quickly came
To the king's house, and went in then and there
And sate among the suitors opposite
Eurymachus, who was his special friend.
Then they that waited placed by him a mess
Of meat, and a grave dame brought and set bread
For him to eat. Now yet a short way off
Odysseus and the goodly swineherd halted,
And the shrill music of the hollow lyre
Rang round them : Phemius was striking up
The prelude of his song before the suitors.
'Thereon Odysseus caught the swineherd's hand,
And said :

' This surely is Odysseus' noble home,
Eumæus ! It might easily be known
Though seen 'mid many others. House on house
It stretches ; and its yard is built with wall
And coping, and its double doors are strong.
I disdain it no man could. And I perceive
That in it many men are holding revel,
Because a smell of cooking goeth up,
And from within a lyre is sounding, which
The gods have made mess-fellow of the feast.'

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
' Thou knowst it easily ; because in this
Thy wit is quick, as in all else beside.
But come, let us bethink us how to manage.

Wilt thou go first into the well-set house
And join the suitors while I tarry here ?
Or if thou wilt, remain thou here and I
Will go ahead ; but do not linger long,
Lest someone see thee waiting there outside
And pelt or beat thee. Look to this, I say.'

* Then said Odysseus, sore-tried goodly man :
' I see, I heed, I understand thy bidding.
But go thou first, and I will tarry here
Behind, for I am well inured to blows
And stones ; my heart is resolute ; I have
Already borne much hurt by war and wave :
Let this thing too be added unto those.
But no one can conceal his belly-lust,
That curse which works much evil upon men ;
Why, for its sake are also fitted out
Galleys with oars upon the tireless sea,
That carry bane to foemen.'

So talked they two together. But, behold,
A dog who lay there lifted up his head
And pricked his ears, steadfast Odysseus' dog,
Argos, whom he himself had bred of old
But had no joy of him, because ere that
He went to sacred Ilios. In days past
The young men used to take the dog to hunt
Wild goats and deer and hares ; but now he lay
Neglected, while his master was away,
In the deep dung of mules and cows whereof
There lay a heap before the gates, until
Odysseus' slaves should carry it away
To dung his broad demesne. There, full of lice,
Dog Argos lay ; yet e'en now, when he knew
It was Odysseus that was near at hand,
He wagged his tail, and both his ears he dropped,
But had no strength left to approach his master.

Odysseus looked aside and wiped away
A tear, and from Eumæus easily
Hid what he did, and straightway questioned him :

‘ Eumæus, this is mighty strange —this dog
Here, lying in the dung ! Fine-made he is,
But this I am not sure of, if he hath
Speed with this beauty, or is only like
Those table-dogs which owners keep for show.’

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
‘ Ay, ay ! this is a dog whose lord is dead
In some far land. But were he what he was
In looks and in performance, when Odysseus
Left him and went to Troy, why, thou wouldst be
Amazed at once to see his speed and strength.
When he gave chase, no quarry could escape him
In the thick forest depths, and on the trail
He was a good dog too ! But now he is
In evil case : his lord is dead far off
From his own country, and the careless women
Do not look after him. When masters lose
Dominion, slaves no longer are disposed
To honest service. For when comes the day
That makes a man a slave, then Zeus, whose voice
Is heard afar, takes half his worth away.’

With that he walked into the well-set house,
And straight into the hall he went to join
The lordly suitors. But on Argos fell
Black death for portion, in that hour when he
Had seen Odysseus in the twentieth year.

Now as the swineherd came along the hall,
The godlike prince was far the first to see him,
And nodding quickly called him to his side ;
And looking round Eumæus took a stool
That lay there, where the carver used to sit
When for the suitors feasting in the hall

He carved the many joints of meat. He carried
And placed it opposite Telemachus,
At the same table, and sate down there too.
And an attendant took a mess of meat
And served it him, with bread out of the basket.
Then close behind him came Odysseus in.
He seemed to be a woful aged beggar
Leaning upon a staff, in foul rags clad.
Upon the ashen threshold just inside
The door he sate, and leaned against a post
Of cypress wood, which once some carpenter
Had planed with skill and straightened to the line.
Thereon Telemachus called up the swineherd,
And took a whole loaf from the shapely basket
And meat, as much as both his hands could hold,
And said to him :

‘ Go, take and give this to the stranger ; bid him
Go round himself and beg of all the suitors.
Shame is no comrade for a needy man.’

So said he, and the swineherd when he heard
His saying went, and coming to Odysseus,
He spake with wingéd words :

‘ Stranger, to thee Telemachus gives these ;
And bids thee go thyself around the suitors
And beg of all of them. “ Shame ill becomes ”
Says he “ a beggar man ”.’

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ King Zeus, I pray thee, bless Telemachus
’Mid men, and give him all his heart’s desire !’

With that he took the present in both hands
And laid it down there on his wretched scrip
Before his feet. Then all the while the minstrel
Was singing in the hall, so long he ate ;
But when he had eaten, and the holy minstrel
Was finishing his song, throughout the halls

The suitors brake in uproar ; but Athene
Came to Odysseus' side, and urged him on
To go among the suitors gathering crusts,
And find out which of them were just, and which
Were lawless ; nonetheless she had no mind
To save one man of them from doom. So he
Set out from left to right to beg of each,
Stretching his hand out every way, as if
He were a veteran beggar. And they pitied
And gave ; and wondered, asking one another
About him, who he was and whence he came.

Then 'mid them spake Melanthius of the goats :
' Harken, ye suitors of the famous queen,
Touching this man. Him have I seen before.
Why, surely 'twas the swineherd brought him here ;
But whence the man himself claims origin
I do not know at all.'

Thereat Antinous rebuked the swineherd ;
' Infamous swineherd, tell me, why didst thou
Bring this man to the city ? Have we not
Enough of vagabonds without him, plagues
Of beggars, kill-joys of the feast ? Dost thou
Think it so light a thing that these men gather
And eat thy master's substance here, that thou
Must bid this fellow too ?'

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer him :
' Thou art a gentleman, Antinous,
But thou dost not speak well. For of himself
Who would seek out and bid a foreigner,
Save he be one of those who serve the people,
A prophet or a healer or a builder,
Ay, or a holy minstrel, who delights
Mankind with song ? These are the men who are
Made welcome over all wide earth ; but none
Would call a beggar in, to eat him up !

But above all the suitors thou art ever
Harsh to Odysseus' slaves, and most to me.
Yet while my lady, true Penelope,
Is living, and divine Telemachus
Within the house I do not care, not I.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Hush, do not answer him with many words ;
Because Antinous is ever wont
To start an ugly brawl with bitter speech.
Ay, and he urges on the others too.'

Then to Antinous with wingéd words
He spake : ' Antinous, thou carest well
For me, as might a father for his son,
Who bidst me hunt this stranger from the hall
With a peremptory word. Now God forbid
That this should happen! Take and give him something ;
I grudge it not ; indeed I charge thee do it.
And in this thing do not regard my mother,
Nor any of the slaves within the house
Of heaven-born Odysseus. Nay, but thou
Hast no such purpose ; thou art far more fain
Thyself to eat than feed another man.'

Then said Antinous in answer to him :
' Telemachus, ungovernable spirit,
Thou boaster, what is this that thou hast said ?
If all the suitors reached him out as much
As I, then for three months at least this house
Would keep him at a distance.'

With that he seized the stool whereon he rested
His smooth feet as he feasted, and displayed it
From underneath the table where it lay.
But all the rest gave gifts, and filled the wallet
With bread and bits of meat. And now Odysseus
Had nearly made his way back to the threshold,
There to enjoy the bounty of the Achæans,

When, passing by Antinous, he said :

‘ Give, friend ! to me thou seemest not the worst
Of the Achæans, but the best of all,
For thou art like a king ; wherefore thou shouldst
Give me some bread—more than the others gave.
So will I praise thee o’er the boundless earth.
For once I too had mine own home ’mid men,
A wealthy home, for I was rich, and often
Gave bounty to a wanderer, never caring
What was his sort and in what need he came.
Unnumbered slaves I had, and all things else
Whereby men live well and are reckoned rich.
But Zeus, the son of Cronos, plundered me—
Of set intent no doubt—who sent me forth
To go with roving buccaneers to Egypt,
A long, long way, to meet my doom. I moored
My curving ships within the river Nile ;
Then I gave orders to my trusty men
To bide there with the ships and guard the ships,
While I sent spies out unto points of vantage.
But they succumbed to wantonness and followed
Their own brute force, and soon they fell to wasting
The fair fields of the Egyptians, killing men
And carrying off their wives and little children.
Then the alarm sped quickly to the city,
And people heard the shouting, and they came
At streak of day, and all the plain was filled
With foot and chariots and the flash of bronze.
Then Zeus, the lord of lightning, on my men
Sent evil panic, and not one dare stand
And face it, for on all sides peril lay.
There many of us they slew with the sword’s edge
But some of us they carried up alive,
Unto their town, perforce to slave for them.
But me they gave unto a friend who met them,

To take to Cyprus, even Iasus' son,
Dmetor, who ruled o'er Cyprus in his power.
Thence hither am I come in sore distress.'

Thereat Antinous answered him and said :
' What god hath brought this bane on us, to spoil
Our feast ? Stand off there, yonder in the midst,
Far off my table, lest too soon thou reach
A bitter Egypt and a bitter Cyprus,
In that thou art a bold and shameless beggar !
Thou comest up to every man in turn,
And thoughtlessly they give ; there never is
Scruple or stint about dispensing freely
Of others' goods, when each has plenty by him.'

'Then stepping backward deep Odysseus said :
' Ah, so thou lackest wits to match thy looks !
Thou wouldst not give whoever begged of thee
The merest grain of salt from thine own house,
Thou that art sitting at another's board
And canst not find it in thy heart to take
And give me bread ; yet there is plenty by thee !'

So said he ; and Antinous grew angrier
At heart, and glared at him beneath his brows,
And spake with wingéd words : ' Well, after that,
Thou shalt not leave the hall, I swear, with honour,
Since thou hast dared to utter taunts to me.'

With that he caught the footstool up and threw it,
And just where the right shoulder joins the back
He struck Odysseus. Steady as a rock
Odysseus stood, and never reeled beneath
Antinous' cast ; but shook his head in silence,
And pondered evil deep within his heart.
Back to the threshold went he and sate down,
And laid his well-filled wallet by, and spake
Among the suitors :

' Hear me, ye suitors of the glorious queen,

And let me say all that I feel within me.
No pain of heart, no grief in truth there is,
When a man fighting for his own possessions,
His cattle or white sheep, gets stricken ; but
Antinous hath struck me for the sake
Of my vile belly, that infernal thing
That works men so much hurt. Yet, if for beggars
Are any gods or vindicators, then
May the death-stroke o'ertake Antinous
Before his wedding !'

Antinous, Eupeithes' son, replied :
' Stranger, sit still and eat, or go elsewhere,
Lest, hand or foot, the young men drag thee forth
Right through the house, and strip off all thy skin,
For talking in such fashion.'

So said he, but they all felt much resentment ;
And thus one of the lordly youths would say :
' Thou didst not well, Antinous, to strike
The wretched wanderer—few man that thou art,
If there is haply any god in heaven !
Yea, and the gods in guise of far-come strangers,
In any form that suits them, roam through cities,
And watch men's violence or righteousness.'

So spake the suitors, but he paid no heed.
Now when that blow was struck, Telemachus
Conceived great sorrow in his heart ; howbeit
No tear he shed, but shook his head in silence,
And deep within his heart he pondered evil.

But when the news of the blow struck in hall
Came to the ears of wise Penelope,
She said amid her handmaids : ' May Apollo
The glorious bowman likewise smite thee too !'

And the housewife Eurynome replied :
' O might we win fulfilment of our prayers !
So should not one of all these fellows come

'To fair-throned Dawn.'

And wise Penelope replied to her :
'Nanny, they all are enemies ; for all
Are plotting evil, but Antinous
Above them all is like the shadow of death !
There is some wretched stranger roaming round
The house and begging of them, for his need
Compels him, and the others filled his wallet
And gave to him, but this man flung a stool
And struck him on the base of his right shoulder.'

So sitting in her room, while brave Odysseus
Was at his meal, she spake among her maids.
Then calling the good swineherd up she said :

'Go, good Eumæus, to the stranger. Bid him
Come here, that I may greet him and may ask him
If he hath news of steadfast-souled Odysseus,
Or seen him with his eyes. He seems a man
Who far and wide hath wandered.'

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer her :
'O queen, if the Achæans would keep silence !
Such things he hath to tell, that he could charm
Thy very soul. Three nights I had him with me,
Three days I kept him in my hut, for first
He came to me, when from his ship he fled ;
And even so he had not finished telling
Of his afflictions. As a man will gaze
Upon a singer, whom the gods have taught
To sing men songs of longing, and they feel
An endless wish to list whene'er he sings,
So did he charm me, sitting in my house.
He is Odysseus' friend of old, he says,
And hath his home in Crete, where is the race
Of Minos ; thence he hath come hither now
With trouble, wandering on and ever on,
And he stands to it that he hath heard news

About Odysseus, yet alive and near
At hand in the fat land of the Thesprotians,
And he is bringing many treasures home.'

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
' Go, call him here, that he may talk with me
Unto my face. And let those fellows sit
There in the gateway, or else here indoors,
And take their pleasure, since their heart is gay ;
For their belongings lie untouched at home,
Bread and sweet wine, whereon their servants feed ;
While daily they come thronging to our house,
Slaying our kine and sheep and fatted goats,
And in their revel drink the sparkling wine
Unsparingly, and all this wealth is squandered ;
For there is no man left, like to Odysseus,
To keep the house from ruin. O that he
Might come, come back to his own land ! Then soon
Would he avenge their violence, with his son.'

Telemachus sneezed loudly as she spake,
And the house echoed queerly. And the queen
Laughed, and with wingéd words addressed Eumæus :

' Go, pray, and call the stranger here before me.
Didst thou not mark it, how my son hath sneezed
At all my words ? Therefore shall utter death
Fall upon all the suitors, every one :
Not one of them shall 'scape from death and fate.
And one thing else I tell thee, and do thou
Lay it to heart. If I perceive the man
Tells nothing but the very truth, I will
Clothe him with cloak and tunic, goodly clothes.'

And when he heard her words, the swineherd went
And coming near Odysseus spake to him
With wingéd words :

' Sir stranger, come to wise Penelope,
The mother of Telemachus ; she calls thee.

Her feelings bid her ask about her husband,
Though she hath suffered much. And if she sees
Thee telling naught but very truth, she will
Clothe thee with cloak and tunic, which thou needest
The most of all. As for thy food, thou shalt
Go begging through the land, and fill thy belly,
And whosoever wills shall give it thee.'

Then patient brave Odysseus answered him :
' Soon will I tell the whole true tale, Eumæus,
To wise Penelope, Icarius' daughter,
For well I know about him, and we twain
Have borne distress in common. But I feel
Some fear of this assembly of rude suitors,
Whose wantonness and violence go up
To iron heaven. For when, as I just now
Was passing down the hall nor doing harm,
Yon fellow struck and hurt me, there was none
Neither Telemachus nor any other,
To save me from the blow. Now therefore bid
Penelope, for all her eagerness,
Bide in her chamber till the set of sun ;
Then let her ask me of her lord, and touching
The day of his return, when she has made me
Sit nearer to the fire, because thou seest
I have but sorry clothes—indeed thou knowest,
Since to thee first I made my supplication.'

He spake, and when the swineherd heard his saying
Away he went, and as he crossed the threshold
Penelope said to him : ' Why, Eumæus,
Thou art not bringing him ! What does he mean,
The wanderer, by this ? Is he afraid
Of someone over-much, or just ashamed
Of lurking in the house ? 'Tis bad for beggars
To feel ashamed ! '

Then, herd Eumæus, didst thou answer her :

‘ He speaks aright, as any other man
Would think, in wishing to avoid the outrage
Of overweening men. But he would have thee
Wait until sunset. And for thee thyself,
My queen, it is far better that thou shouldst
Speak with the man and hear his words alone.’

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
‘ He is no fool, the stranger ; he divines
How it may be. I think no mortal men
Are wicked in their wantonness like these.’

So said she, and the goodly swineherd went
Unto the throng of suitors, when he had
Told her his message ; and forthwith addressed
Telemachus with wingéd words, and held
His head near, that the others might not hear .

‘ Friend, I am off to look after thy pigs,
And all things there—thy livelihood and mine ;
Do thou take charge of all that happens here.
Look first unto thyself, and take good thought
That no ill thing befall thee, for too many
Of the Achæans have ill-will against us ;
May Zeus destroy them ere harm comes on us !’

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
‘ So be it, Daddy ! Get thee gone when thou
Hast supped ; but in the morning come and bring
Good victims ; but leave all these matters here
Unto my care—and that of the immortals.’

So said he, and the swineherd sate him down
Once more upon the polished chair, and when
He had satisfied his soul with meat and drink,
He went his way unto the pigs, and left
The courtyard and the hall full of the feasters ;
And they were making merry with the dance
And song, for now had eventide come on.

BOOK XVIII

Now up there came a common beggar, one
Who begged throughout the town of Ithaca,
Notorious for his greedy appetite,
His endless meals and drinking. Strength and might
He lacked, though big of bulk unto the eye.
Arnæus was his name, for so at birth
His decent mother named him ; but the youths
All called him Irus, for, when any bade,
He used to run on errands. Now this man
Came up, and was for driving out Odysseus
From his own house ; and fell abusing him
With wingéd words :

‘ Get from the gateway, gaffer, lest thou soon
Be lugged out by the foot ! Dost thou not see,
They all are winking at me, bidding me
Drag thee away ? But still I am ashamed
To do it. Nay, get up, I say, or else
Our difference may go as far as blows.’

Then glaring angrily beneath his brows
The deep Odysseus answered him : ‘ My man,
I am not harming thee in deed or word ;
Nor grudge that any man should take and give thee
However large a handful. But this threshold
Will hold us both, and it is not for thee
To grudge me what is after all not thine.
Thou seemst to be a wanderer, as I am ;
And as for luck, it is the gods that are
Most like to give us that. But with thy fists
Provoke me not too much, lest thou annoy me,
And, old man though I am, I paint thy ribs

And lips all bloody. That way should I have
All the more peace to-morrow, for I know
That thou wouldst not come back again to haunt
The palace of Laertes' son, Odysseus.'

Then said to him in wrath the beggar Irus :
' Why, how this blackguard's chatter runs on wheels,
Like some old oven-wife's ! But I will give him
A bad time : I will smash him right and left ;
And knock out every tooth inside his head,
As if he were a boar that raids the crops.
Gird thyself now, that all men, yea, all these
May know how we can fight. Yet how shouldst thou
Fight with a younger man ? '

So did they goad each other heartily
On the smooth step in front of the tall doors.
And the strong prince Antinous heard the twain,
And laughing gaily said unto the suitors :

' Friends, never has there happened such a thing
Before—such an amusing game a god
Has brought this house ! The stranger there and Irus
Are challenging each other to a round.
Come on, and let us set them at it quick ! '

So said he ; and they laughed and all jumped up
And crowded round the ragged beggars. Then
Antinous, Eupheithes' son, spake out :

' Hark, lordly suitors ; I've a word to say.
Here are goats' paunches lying by the fire,
That we laid by for supper-time, and stuffed
With fat and blood. Whichever of these two
Wins, and is proved the better man, let him
Stand up and take his choice of any of them.
And, further, he shall always dine beside us,
Nor will we suffer any other beggar
To come among us and to beg for alms.'

So said Antinous and they approved.

But deep Odysseus said to them with craft :

‘ In no wise, friends, can an old man fordone
With trouble, fight a younger man. And yet
My belly drives me on, that mischief-maker,
For me to be knocked out ! But come ye all,
Swear me a mighty oath that none of you
Will strike me foully with a heavy hand,
To favour Irus, and by violence
Subdue me to this fellow.’

So said he, and they all swore not to strike him,
E’en as he bade them ; and when they had sworn
And made an end of swearing, then once more
Among them spake the strong Telemachus :

‘ If, stranger, thy stout heart and courage bid thee
Defend thyself against this man, then fear
None other of the Achæans ; for whoever
Strikes thee, will have to fight with more than thee.
I am thy host ; but prince Antinous
And prince Eurymachus agree with me,
And both are men of wisdom.’

So said he, and they all applauded. Then
Odysseus girt his rags about his loins
And showed his fine strong thighs and his broad shoulders
And chest and brawny arms. Athene came
Beside him and filled out his limbs for him,
The shepherd of the people. And the suitors
Were mightily amazed, and with a glance
Towards his neighbour, thus would someone say :

‘ Dis-Irused Irus will be soon in trouble
Of his own bringing ! What a splendid thigh
The old man shows from underneath his rags ! ’

So spake they, and the soul of Irus was
Sore shaken ; yet e’en so the serving-men
Girded and led him forth perforce in terror,
So that the flesh was shaking on his limbs.

Then in rebuke Antinous spake to him :

‘ Now, bully, it were better thou wert dead
Or never hadst been born, if thou art scared
And terrified so sorely at this man,
An old man, worn with trouble come upon him.
But I will tell thee plain, and what I say
Shall be fulfilled. If this man knocks thee out
And proves thy better, I will have thee thrown
In a black ship, and carried to the mainland
To Echetus the king, who mutilates
All men alive, and he will cut away
Thy nose and ears with the relentless sword,
And pull thy vitals out and give them raw
To dogs to rend.’

At what he said yet greater shuddering seized
On Irus’ limbs. They led them in the midst,
And both put up their hands. And then Odysseus,
That steadfast goodly man, debated whether
To deal him such a blow that as he fell
The life should leave him, or to hit him lightly
And stretch him on the earth. And as he thought,
This seemed the better plan, to hit him lightly,
Lest the Achæans might take note of him.
Then, when their hands were up, Irus let drive
At his right shoulder, but Odysseus struck him
Fair on the neck below the ear and smashed
The bones in ; and the red blood instantly
Ran from his mouth, and in the dust he fell
Groaning, and kicked his feet upon the ground
And gnashed his teeth. But the proud suitors threw
Their hands up and were like to die of laughing.
Then by the feet Odysseus seized and dragged him
Forth from the doorway till he reached the court
And cloister gates ; and there he set him down
And propped him up against the courtyard wall,

And put his staff into his hands and spake
To him with wingéd words :

‘ Sit there now ; scare away the pigs and dogs,
But do not thou, poor devil, try to pose
As prince of guests and beggars, lest perchance
Thou bring on thee some bigger damage still.’

With that he cast his own mean tattered scrip
About his shoulders, with its twisted cord,
And then he got him back unto the threshold
And there sate down. And laughing merrily
In came the suitors, and they greeted him :

‘ May Zeus, and all the other deathless gods
Grant thee thy dearest wish, thy heart’s desire,
O stranger, seeing thou hast made yon glutton
Cease begging in the land ! For we will soon
Export him to the mainland, unto Echetus
The king, who tortures all men.’

So said they, and the good Odysseus liked
The word of omen. Now Antinous set
A mighty haggis stuffed with fat and blood
Beside him, and Amphinomus took up
Two loaves out of the basket, which he placed
By him, and pledged him in a golden cup :

‘ Greeting, old stranger ! and in days to come
May happiness be thine, albeit now
Thou art beset by many miseries.’

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ Indeed, Amphinomus, thou seemst to me
A man of wisdom, as thy sire was too ;
For I have heard of him a good report,
How Nisus of Dulichium was brave
And rich. And thou art son of his, they say,
And seemst a man of sense. Now will I tell thee,
And do thou lay it to thy soul and listen.
Of all the things that breathe and creep on earth

Earth nurses nothing feebler than a man :
For in his heart he saith that he will never
Suffer affliction in the after time,
While the gods give him excellence, and while
His knees are quick ; but when the blessed gods
Decree him also pain, he bears this too,
As needs he must, with an enduring heart ;
Because the spirit of men on earth is as
Their day is, which the sire of gods and men
Brings down upon them. Yea, and I myself
Was like to have been prosperous once 'mid men,
But many deeds of wantonness I wrought,
Succumbing to my hardihood and strength,
And trusting in my father and my brothers.
Wherefore let no man be unrighteous ever,
But meekly let him keep whatever gifts
The gods may give him ; even as I see
The suitors here contriving wantonness,
Wasting the wealth, nor honouring the wife
Of him, who will—I tell thee—not much longer
Be missing from his friends and native land.
No; he is very near ! But may some god
Withdraw thee hence and home, and thou not meet him,
When back he comes to his dear native land.
For not unblooded will they part, I think,
He and the suitors, once he walks indoors.'

He spake, and pouring forth an offering
He drank the honeyed wine, and gave the cup
Back to the captain's hands. But through the hall
Amphinomus passed on with heavy heart,
Bowing his head ; his soul foreboded evil.
Yet even so he did not 'scape his fate ;
For in the toils Athene bound him also,
So that Telemachus with spear in hand
Should strongly strike him down. And on the chair

Whence he had risen he sate down again.

Now the keen-eyed Athene moved the mind
Of wise Penelope, Icarius' daughter,
To show herself unto the suitors, that
She might set fluttering their hearts, and win
More honour from her husband and her son
Than heretofore. A foolish laugh she laughed,
And spake, and called the nurse :

' Eurynome, much as I loathe the suitors,
My heart is fain, as never yet before,
To let them see me ; and one word I would
Say to my son, which might be for his good—
Not to be always joining the proud suitors,
Who speak him fair, but have ill thoughts behind.*

Eurynome the housewife answered her :
' Ay, child, all this that thou hast said is right.
Go then, disclose thy saying to thy son
And hide it not ; but wash thee first, and touch
Thy cheeks with oil, and go not as thou art
With tear-stained face ; for little good it is
To grieve unceasing alway. For thy son
Is now full-grown, ay, such a bearded man
As 'twas thy dearest prayer to heaven to see him."

Then wise Penelope replied to her :
' Beguile me not, Eurynome, like this—
Though out of love—to wash my skin and touch
Myself with oil. The gods who keep Olympus
Destroyed what looks I had, the day my lord
Sailed in the hollow ships. But call to me
Hippodameia and Autonoe,
To stand in hall beside me. 'Mid the men
I will not go alone. I am ashamed.'

So said she, and the elder woman passed
Out through the room to warn the serving-maids,
And bid them come.

And now Athene, keen-eyed goddess, took
Fresh thought. She shed upon Icarius' daughter
Soft sleep ; and back she sank with loosened limbs
There on the couch. Now all the while she slept
The radiant goddess gave her deathless gifts
To make the Achæans marvel at her. First
She washed her winsome face with heavenly balm
Such as the fair-crowned Cytherea uses
When to the Graces' lovely dance she goes.
And taller too and statelier to behold
The radiant goddess made her, and her skin
More white than new-cut ivory ; and when
Her work was done, she disappeared ; and then
Came from their room the white-armed serving-maids,
A-talking as they came. Whereat sweet sleep
Released Penelope, and with both hands
She rubbed her cheeks and spake ·

‘ Unhappy that I am, what soft repose
Enwrapped me ! O, that spotless Artemis
Would here and now give me a death so mild,
That I no more might mourn my life away,
Lamenting for my wholly noble lord,
For that he was the foremost of the Achæans.’

So down from her bright upper room she came,
And not alone : two maids attended her.
And when that star of women reached the suitors,
By the main post of the strong roof she paused,
Holding her shining veil before her face ;
And on each side of her a faithful maid
Stood by ; and straight the suitors' knees were loosed,
Their hearts enchanted ; and they prayed, each man
That he might lie beside her ; but she spake
Unto Telemachus her son :

‘ Telemachus, thy mind and purpose are
No longer steady. When thou wert a child

'Thou wouldst reflect more sensibly, but now
When thou art big and come to man's estate,
And anyone, a stranger who beheld
Thy height and thy good looks, would say thou wert
Some rich man's son, thy mind and purpose are
No longer balanced as they used to be.
Why, what an outrage has been done in hall,
That thou hast suffered yonder guest to be
So foully dealt with ! How would it be now
If, sitting thus within our house, the stranger
From this rough handling should be hurt at all ?
Disgrace and shame would fall on thee 'mid men !'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
' Mother o' mine, I cannot take it ill
That thou art wroth at this. Yet for myself,
I know and understand each thing, the good
And evil ; but before I was a child.
But still I cannot think out all things wisely ;
For these men, pressing me this way and that
Distract me, meaning mischief, and I have
No one to help. Howbeit this encounter
'Twixt Irus and the stranger fell not out
According to the suitors' liking, but
The stranger proved the better man. I would,
O Father Zeus, Athene, and Apollo,
That here and now the suitors in our house
Were as subdued, their heads all hanging down,
Some in the courtyard, some inside the house,
And each man's limbs were loosed, as Irus there
Sits by the courtyard gate with wagging head,
Like a man drunk, and cannot stand upright
Upon his feet, or get him to his home
Where he should go, because his limbs are loosed !'

Thus were they talking with each other ; then
Eurymachus addressed Penelope :

‘Icarius’ daughter, wise Penelope,
If all the Achæans in Iasian Argos
Could see thee, from to-morrow in your halls
Would feast a greater throng of suitors yet,
Because thou art most excellent of women
In form and beauty and wise mind within.’

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
‘Eurymachus, whatever charm I had
Of face or form the immortals brought to nought
The day the Argives went on board for Troy,
And with them went my lord Odysseus. Ah,
So might he come and watch over my life,
Then greater would my fame be and more fair !
But now I sorrow ; such a host of ills
Some god has brought on me. I mind me well,
When he went forth and left his native land,
He grasped my right hand by the wrist, and said :
“ My dear, I cannot think that back from Troy-land
Will all the mailed Achæans come unscathed !
The Trojans too, they say, are men of war,
Spearmen and benders of the bow and drivers
Of speedy steeds, such as decide most quickly
The mighty quarrel of an even battle.
I know not then if heaven will send me back,
Or if I shall be cut off there in Troy ;
So do thou have a care of all things here ;
Be mindful of my father and my mother
At home here, e’en as now—nay, rather more,
Since I shall be away ; and when thou seest
Thy son a bearded man, wed whom thou wilt,
And leave thy house.” So did he say to me,
And lo, all this is being brought to pass.
The night shall come when a detested marriage
Shall find me out, me most unhappy lady,
Whom Zeus has robbed of comfort. What is more,

In mind and heart I am sore vexed at this :
Was never way of suitors yet like yours !
Men who set out to win a worthy lady,
A rich man's daughter, vying with each other
Bring with them cattle of their own unasked
And goodly flocks, to feast the lady's friends;
They make her splendid gifts; they do not eat
Another's livelihood without atonement.'

So said she, and the steadfast good Odysseus
Was glad that she was luring gifts from them
And comforting their hearts with soothing words,
While in her mind she purposed otherwise.

Eupeithes' son, Antinous, answered her :
'Icarus' daughter, wise Penelope,
As for the gifts which any of the Achæans
Likes to bring here, accept them: 'twere amiss
That we should give thee none. But as for us,
We go not to our lands nor yet elsewhere,
Before thou give thyself as wife to him
Whoever is the best of the Achæans.'

So spake Antinous, and they liked his speech.
And each man sent a herald for his presents.
Unto Antinous was brought a robe
Long, beautiful and broidered, and it had
In all twelve golden brooches with bent teeth ;
Anon his servant brought Eurymachus
An amber-beaded chain of quaint gold setting,
Bright as the sun ; and to Eurydamas
His henchmen brought a pair of ear-rings, set
With three fair drops that flashed deliciously ;
And from the dwelling of the prince Peisander,
Polyctor's son, his servant brought a necklace,
A lovely jewel. So of the Achæans
One brought one pretty gift, and one another.
Then she, that star of women, went her way

Up to her bedroom, and her waiting-maids
Were busy carrying off the lovely presents.

Meantime the suitors turned for their delight
To joyous song and dancing, as they waited
For eve to fall ; and as they made them merry
The dusk of evening fell. Anon they set
Three braziers in the hall to give them light,
And stacked dry fuel round them, long ago
Seasoned and sere, and newly billeted ;
And in between the braziers they set links,
And patient-souled Odysseus' serving-maids
Took turns to light them. But he spake among them,
Ay, he the deep Odysseus, sprung from Zeus :

‘ Maids of Odysseus, of a lord long gone,
Get to your rooms, where is your honoured queen,
And twist the yarn or card the wool beside her,
And sitting in her room make glad her heart.
But I will tend the lights for all these men.
Ay, if they choose to wait for fair-throned Dawn,
They shall not outstay me : I am a man
Of great endurance.’

He spoke ; but they began to laugh, and glanced
One at another, and in shameless wise
Fair-cheeked Melantho rated him Now she
Was Dolius' daughter, but Penelope
Had reared and cherished her as her own child,
And given her playthings to her heart's desire ;
Yet she e'en so felt for Penelope
No sympathy, but loved Eurymachus
And was indeed his mistress. This same wench
Reviled Odysseus in abusive words :

‘ O wretched stranger, thou art some cracked brain,
Too proud to seek a smithy for the night
Or common lodging, but must needs come here
And prate so loud and bold 'mid many lords,

And hast no fear at heart ! Surely the wine
Has got thy wits, or else perhaps thy mind
Is always thus, and so thou talkest nonsense.
Art thou beside thyself that thou hast beaten
The beggar Irus ? 'Ware, lest presently
A better man than he stand up with thee,
To lay his heavy hands about thy head,
And make thee all a mess of blood and then
Throw thee outside.'

Then with an angry glance beneath his brows
Said deep Odysseus to her : ' In a moment
Will I go there and tell Telemachus ;
That he forthwith may hew thee limb from limb,
For talking so, thou bitch ! '

So said he, and his saying scared the women.
They scurried through the hall, and each one's knees
Were loosed with terror, for they thought he meant
His words. But he stood by the flaring braziers
Tending the lights, and stared at all the men.
Yet in his heart he thought on other things—
On things that were not to be unfulfilled.

But nowise would Athene let the suitors
In their high spirits cease from biting scorn,
That in Laertian Odysseus' heart
The pain might sink still deeper. So began
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus
To speak among them, jibing at Odysseus
And making laughter for his own companions :

' Hearken, ye suitors of the glorious queen,
That as the spirit bids me I may speak.
Had not the gods so willed, this man had not
Come to Odysseus' house. At any rate
I seem to see the torchlight gleam from him,
Ay, from his head, which hath no hair on it,
No, not a trace.'

So said he, and withal addressed Odysseus,
Sacker of cities : ' Art thou willing, stranger,
To serve for hire, if I should take thee on,
Upon the march-land—and thy pay should be
Quite safe—collecting stones for walls and planting
Tall trees ? And I would find thee food the whole time,
And clothe and give thee sandals for thy feet.
But since thine only learning is of evil,
Thou wilt not care to turn thyself to work,
Preferring to go slinking through the country
That thou mayst get thee wherewithal to fill
Thy never-sated belly.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Eurymachus, I wish we two could have
A match of work in the spring season, when
The long days come, at mowing grass ; and I
Would have a crescent scythe, and thou another
Just like it, and there should be grass in plenty,
That we might test our labour, without pause
For food right up to dark. Or would again
Oxen there were to drive—the best there are—
Tawny and large, a pair well filled with fodder,
Of equal age and power to bear the yoke,
And strength untired ; and that there were a field
Four-acred, and the clod should yield before
The plough ; then thou shouldst see if I can cut
A furrow straight before me to the end !
Or would again this very day Cronion
Might bring upon us war, from whence he would
And that I had a shield and pair of spears,
And brazen helm fitting my forehead well ;
Then shouldst thou see me mingling in the van
Of fighting men, and not speak tauntingly
About my belly to me. But thou art
A big hard-hearted bully, and forsooth

Thou think'st thyself a great and mighty man,
Because thy comrades are but few and feeble.
Ah, if Odysseus might return and come
To his own land ! Soon wouldst thou find yon doors,
Wide as indeed they are, too strait for thee
As thou wert flying through the gate and out !

He spake ; and all the more Eurymachus
Grew wroth at heart, and with an angry glance
Beneath his brows spake wingéd words to him :

‘ Soon, ruffian. I will make thee sorry for it,
Prating so bold in front of many lords,
So unafraid at heart ! It must be wine
Has got thy wits, or else perhaps thy mind
Is always thus, and so thou talkest nonsense.
Art thou beside thyself that thou hast beaten
The beggar Irus ? ’

With that he seized a footstool. But Odysseus
In fear of him sank down before the knees
Of the Dulichian prince Amphinomus ;
And so the missile struck a wine-bearer
On his right hand ; the wine-jug with a clang
Fell to the ground, while with a cry the man
Dropped backwards in the dust. Thereon the suitors
Brake into clamour through the shadowy halls,
And glancing at his neighbour one would say :

‘ I wish our guest had perished somewhere else
Upon his wanderings, ere he came to us !
Then would he not have brought such tumult on us.
Now here are we at discord over beggars,
And there will be delight in the fair feast
No longer, since ignoble things prevail. ’

Then ’mid them spake Telemachus, strong prince :
‘ My good men, ye are mad ; and your demeanour
Betrays that ye have eaten and have drunk,
Some god is surely moving you. Nay, now

That ye have feasted well, go to your homes
To rest, whene'er ye are so minded, yet
'Tis not for me to turn out any man.'

So said he, and all bit their lips, and marvelled
To hear Telemachus, so bold he spake.
But then the noble son of princely Nisus,
Aretias' son, spoke out and said to them :

'After so just a speech, my friends, no man
Surely need be annoyed, nor answer back
In jangling words. Misuse ye not this stranger,
Nor any of the slaves within the home
Of heaven-born Odysseus. Nay, but come,
Bid him who bears the wine pour for libation
Into the cups, that we, when we have made
Libation, may go home and take our rest.
But for the stranger, in Odysseus' halls
Leave him in trust unto Telemachus,
To whose house he hath come.'

So said he, and they all approved his words.
Then Muius, a young Dulichian herald,
Amphinomus' attendant, mixed for them
The bowl ; and by them all in turn he stood
And served to them ; and they poured forth to all
The blessed gods, and drank the honeyed wine.
And when they had made libation and had drunk
To heart's content, they went their way, each man
To his own home to rest.

BOOK XIX

Now was the good Odysseus left behind
In hall, devising with Athene's aid
The slaying of the suitors ; and he spake
Straight to Telemachus with wingéd words :

‘ Needs must we lay away, Telemachus,
The tools of war within, ay, every one ;
And when the suitors miss them, and enquire
Of thee, then thus beguile them with soft words :
“ Out of the smoke I laid them by, because
No longer are they like those that of old
Odysseus left, when he went forth to Troy,
But all befouled, to such extent had come
The breath of fire on them. And what is more,
Some god put in my heart this graver fear,
Lest being hot with wine ye raise up strife
Among you, and do hurt to one another,
And shame the wooing and the feast ; because
Steel of itself allures a man to it.” ’

So said he, and Telemachus obeyed
His father, and he called forth Eurycleia
The nurse, and said to her :

‘ Come, nurse, I bid thee, shut the women up
In the zenana, while I put away
My father's weapons in the armoury,
Good weapons, which are fouling in the smoke,
Uncared for in the hall, since he went off,
And I was still a child. And now I wish
To lay them by, beyond the breath of fire.’

The good nurse Eurycleia answered him :
‘ Ay, child, if only thou wouldst always take

Such thought to mind the house, and guard its store
Of wealth ! But come, who then shall fetch a light
And bear it, since thou wouldst not let the maids
Who might have given light, go on before thee ?'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :

' This stranger here ; for I will keep no man
In idleness, who eateth of my bread,
' Though he be come from far.'

So said he ; but her saying found no wings.
She locked the doors of the fine rooms ; and then
Odysseus and his glorious son sprang up,
And fell to carrying in the bossy shields
And helmets and sharp spears ; in front of them
Pallas Athene with a golden lamp
Made a most lovely light. Then on a sudden
Unto his father said Telemachus :

' Why, Father, what a mighty marvel this is
' That I behold ! To me it seems at least,
The house walls and the ornamented bays,
The pillars running up, the beams of pine,
Are all aglow as with a flame of fire.
Some god is surely in the house, of them
Who hold wide heaven.'

' Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Hush ! and restrain thy thoughts and ask no questions.
This is the wont, I tell thee, of the gods
Who hold Olympus. But do thou lie down ;
And I will tarry here behind, that I
May stir the maidens and thy mother further ;
And in her sorrow she will question me
Of each thing, one by one.'

So said he, and his son walked from the hall,
Lit by the blazing torches to his room,
To rest where he was wont to lay him down
When sweet sleep came upon him. There too now

He laid him down and waited for bright Dawn.
But in the hall was good Odysseus left
Behind, devising with Athene's aid
The slaying of the suitors.

Now from her room came wise Penelope,
Like Artemis or golden Aphrodite ;
And for her by the fire they set a chair
In her accustomed place, a chair inlaid
With ivory and silver spires. Of old
Icmalius craftsman made it, and beneath
He made a footstool that was part of it ;
Whereon they used to spread a great sheep-skin.
There then was seated wise Penelope,
And from their room came forth the white-armed maids,
And they began to clear away the heaps
Of food, and the mess tables, and the cups
From which the proud lords had been drinking. Then
They shook the braziers' embers on the floor,
And piled on them abundance of fresh logs,
To light and warm the place.

Now yet a second time began Melantho
To scold Odysseus : ' Stranger, what, wilt thou
Be still a nuisance to us here all night,
Roaming the house and spying on the women ?
Get out, thou wretch ! Be thankful for thy supper ;
Or else thou shalt be beaten with a torch,
And very quickly find thyself outside.'

Then with an angry scowl beneath his brows
The deep Odysseus answered her : ' Good woman,
Why dost thou have at me thus angrily ?
Is it because I am unclean, and clad
In sorry rags, and beg throughout the land ?
I do ; for need compels me. Of my sort
Are beggar-men and wanderers. For I too
Had once a dwelling of my own 'mid men,

A wealthy home, for I was rich, and often
Gave bounty to a wanderer, never caring
What was his sort or in what need he came.
And I had countless slaves, and all things else
Whereby men live well and are reckoned rich.
But Zeus, the son of Cronos, plundered me,
No doubt of his good pleasure. Wherefore, woman,
Beware, lest thou likewise some day lose all
This brave array, wherein thou art the first
Among the maids ; lest, it may be, thy mistress
Grow vexed and angered with thee, or perchance
Odysseus come ; there yet is room for hope.
But e'en if he has perished, as thou thinkest,
And is to come no more, yet is his son,
Telemachus, by favour of Apollo
One such as he ; nor is he blind to it,
If any of the women in the house
Is wanton ; since he is a child no more.'

So said he, and the wise Penelope
Heard him, and chid the maid and called to her :

'Thou brazen shameless hussy ! Be thou sure,
Thy monstrous conduct is not hid from me,
And thou shalt lose thy head to wipe it out.
Thou knewest well, because thou heardest it
From mine own lips, how that I had a mind
To ask this stranger in my halls for news
About my lord ; for I am sore distressed.'

Then to the stewardess Eurynome
Likewise she said : ' Eurynome, bring here
A settle with a fleece upon it, that
The stranger may sit down and tell his tale,
And hear me too. I want to question him.'

So said she and Eurynome at once
Brought and set down a polished chair, and cast
A fleece on it. There then Odysseus sate,

That steadfast goodly man ; and of the twain
The wise Penelope was first to speak :

‘ Sir, the first question I myself would put
To thee is this. Who among men art thou,
And whence ? Thy town and parents, where are they ? ’

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
‘ There is no mortal in the whole wide world
Could blame thee, lady. For thy fame goes up
To the broad heaven, as doth the fame of some
Unspotted king, who out of fear of the gods
Rules many mighty men, upholding right ;
And the dark earth bears wheat and barley grain,
The trees are bowed with fruit, the flocks bear young
Unceasing, and the sea yields fish ; and all
Of his good guidance, and the people thrive
Beneath him. Wherefore do thou ask me now,
Here in thy house, of all things else thou wilt ;
But not about my race and native land,
Lest, as I think thereon, thou fill my heart
The more with pain ; indeed I am a man
Of many griefs. Nor would I wish to sit
Weeping and wailing in another’s house ;
For it is bad to grieve unceasing away.
I would not like one of thy serving-maids
Nor thee thyself to be annoyed with me,
And say I swim in tears because my head
Is weighed with wine.’

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
‘ Stranger, whatever excellence I had
Of face or form, the immortals brought to nought
The day the Argives went on board for Troy,
And with them also went my lord Odysseus.
Ah, might he come and watch o’er this my life,
Then greater would my fame be and more fair !
But now I sorrow ; such a host of ills

Some god has shot at me. For all the chiefs
Who rule over the isles—Dulichium,
And Same and Zacynthus of the woods—
And they who dwell in clear-seen Ithaca,
Woo me unwilling and lay waste my house.
Thus I regard not suppliants nor strangers,
And heed not heralds on their public task,
But eat my heart out, longing for Odysseus.
These men press on my marriage, but I wind
My wiles. Some god first put it in my head,
To set up in my halls a mighty web
And fall a-weaving ; fine of thread it was
And very wide ; and then to them I said :

“ My princely suitors, now that good Odysseus
Is dead, though ye would speed my marriage on,
Have patience yet, till I complete this robe.
I would not that my spinning should be wasted.
'Tis prince Laertes' shroud, against the day
When the fell doom of death that lays men low
Shall strike him down ; that of Achæan women
Throughout the land none may account it blame
In me, that he should sleep without a shroud,
Who in his life had gotten great possessions.”

‘ So said I, and their haughty hearts assented.
So then by day I wove at that great web,
And in the night I bade them set beside me
The torches and unpicked it ; thus by craft
I fooled the Achæans, and eluded them
A three years' space ; but when the fourth year came
As round the seasons rolled and waned the months,
And the long tale of days was brought to pass,
Thanks to my gross and heedless maids, at last
They came on me and caught me and reviled me ;
And so perforce and sore against my will
I finished it. Nor can I now escape

This marriage, nor make any other plan.
My parents pester me to wed; my son
Is restless while these men devour his substance,
And he takes note of it; for by this time
He is a man, full able to look after
A house which Zeus hath honoured. Well, e'en so,
Tell me of thine own stock, whence thou art sprung.
Thou art not gotten of some oak or stone
Of ancient story !'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' O honoured lady of Laertes' son,
And wilt thou not forbear to question me
About my race ? Well, I will tell thee then ;
Though thou wilt give me over to more sorrows
Than these that hold me now. 'Tis ever thus,
When from his native land a man has been
Absent for so long time as I have now,
Roaming with pain through many towns of men.
Yet e'en so will I tell thee what thou askest
And dost enquire of me. There is a land
Called Crete, amid the wine-dark sea, most rich
And fair, enringed with water ; therein are
Folk many beyond count, and ninety cities.
They speak not all one tongue ; their speech is mixed.
There dwell Achæans and high-bred Pelasgians,
And valiant native Cretans, and Cydonians,
And Dorians with their waving plumes. Among
Their towns is mighty Knossus, wherein Minos
Being but nine years old began to rule,
Who was great Zeus' familiar friend. Now he
Was father of great-souled Deucalion,
My father : for Deucalion begat
Me and the prince Idomeneus ; my brother
Had sailed in his beaked ships to Ilios
With Atreus' sons. Aethon is my proud name ;

The younger son was I, and he the elder
And better man. 'Twas there I saw Odysseus
And gave him guest-gifts. For a raging gale
Bore also him, when on his course for Troy-land,
To Crete, and swept him on past cape Malea ;
And in Amnisus, where there is the cave
Of Eilithyia, in a hard-won haven
He stayed his ships, and scarce escaped the storm.
And straight up to the town he came, and asked
About Idomeneus. " I am his friend "
He said " beloved and honoured." But 'twas then
The tenth or next dawn since Idomeneus
Had sailed in his beaked ships for Ilios.
And so I took him to the house, and gave him
Good entertainment with all loving-kindness
Out of my home's rich stock ; and for the rest
Of his companions, from the public store
I gathered barley-meal and sparkling wine
And bulls for sacrifice, and gave them these
Unto their hearts' content ; and there twelve days
The brave Achæans tarried ; for strong Boreas
Pent them up there, nor suffered them to stand
Upright upon the shore : some angry power
Had roused it. But upon the thirteenth day
The wind abated and they put to sea.'

Now all these lies he made sound like the truth.
Her tears flowed as she listened, and her face
Melted, as melts the snow on the high hills
When Eurus thaws it, after the West wind
Has strewn it wide ; and as it melts the streams
Of rivers run full-fed : so, as she wept,
Her fair cheeks melted, while she mourned her husband
Who even then sate by her. Now Odysseus
Within his heart pitied his grieving wife ;
But yet his eyes, as they were horn 'or iron,

Stood fixed between their lids, and craftily
He hid his tears. But she, when she had had
Her fill of tearful sorrow, in her turn
Made answer to him, and she spoke and said :

‘ Indeed, now, stranger, do I think to test thee,
Whether in truth there in thy halls thou didst
E’en as thou tellest, entertain my lord
With all his godlike comrades. Tell me now
What kind of clothes he wore upon his body,
And how himself he looked ; and of the men
Who followed him.’

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
‘ Lady, for one so long time parted from him,
’Tis hard to answer thee ; for it is now
The twentieth year since he went thence and left
My country ; nonetheless will I describe him
As my mind sees him. Brave Odysseus wore
A fleecy purple mantle, double-folded ;
The brooch was wrought of gold with double clasps,
And on its front there was a strange device :
In his fore-paws a hound was holding fast
A dappled fawn, and gripped it as it writhed ;
All were amazed at it, how wrought in gold
The dog was throttling in his hold the fawn,
While with its feet it strained to get away.
The tunic which he wore I noted too :
It had a sheen like a dry onion skin,
So soft it was, and glistened like the sun ;
I tell thee, many women gazed at it
In wonder. I will tell thee one more thing,
And do thou ponder it. I know not whether
At home Odysseus went thus clad, or haply
One of his friends gave him this raiment when
He boarded his swift ship, or else maybe
A stranger, since he had so many friends ;

For few of the Achæans were his peers.
I too myself gave him a sword of bronze
And a fine purple cloak of double fold,
And tasseled coat, and sent him with all honour
Away on his decked ship. And, I remember,
A herald somewhat older than himself
Went with him ; I will tell thee of him too,
What he was like—round-shouldered, dark of skin
And curly-haired ; his name, Eurybates.
Odysseus prized him over all his comrades
Because he was like-minded with himself.'

His tale aroused in her intenser passion
Of weeping, as she knew the certain signs
He gave her for a proof. But, having had
Her fill of tears and grief, she said to him :

' I pitied thee before, sir ; but indeed now
Thou shalt be dear and honoured in my house.
'Twas I that gave him these same clothes that thou
Describest, and I folded them and brought them
Forth from the store-room, and besides I added
The shining brooch to be a joy to him ;
But never shall I welcome back my husband
Returning home to his dear native land !
Wherefore by evil fate it was Odysseus
Departed in his hollow ship to see
Black Ilios, that never should be named.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' O honoured lady of Laertes' son,
No longer mar thy lovely face, nor waste
Thy heart a whit in weeping for thy husband.
And yet I cannot blame thee ; every woman,
Lorn of her wedded lord to whom in love
She hath borne children, weeps ; although he were
Far other than Odysseus, who, they say,
Was like the gods. But cease thy lamentation ;

Mark what I say. For in all truth I will
Tell thee and hide it not. But lately I
Heard of Odysseus' coming, how he is
Near by, and yet alive in the fat land
Of the Thesprotians ; and with him he brings
Many rich treasures, begging through the land.
But his true comrades and his hollow ship
He lost upon the wine-dark sea, as he
Sailed from the isle Thrinacia ; for Zeus
And Helios were wroth with him, because
His men had slain the kine of Helios.
So they all perished in the surging sea,
But him the wave threw up astride a keel
Upon the shore of the Phæacians' land,
Who are near kin to gods ; and heartily
They honoured him as if he were a god,
And made him many presents and were anxious
Themselves to send him safely home. Nay more,
Odysseus would have been here long ago,
But that to him it seemed more gain to wander
Wide o'er the earth and gather wealth. Such skill
Odysseus hath above all men in gain,
That never man alive could match with him.
Thus Pheidon, king of the Thesprotians, told me :
And to my very face he took his oath,
As in his house he poured an offering,
The ship e'en then was waiting by the shore,
And the crew ready, that should carry him
To his dear native land. But me he sent
Forth first, because a ship of the Thesprotians
Chanced to be sailing for Dulichium,
That rich corn-land. He showed me all the treasure
Odysseus had amassed ; why, it would feed
His children after for ten generations ;
So vast the treasure was that he had stored

In the king's palace. But, said he, Odysseus
Was to Dodona gone, to learn the will
Of Zeus, from the high-crested holy oak,
How he should come to his dear native land
After long absence, whether openly,
Or unperceived.

'In this wise, as I tell thee, he is safe,
And very soon will come, and not much longer
Be missing from his friends and native land.
Yet I will take an oath to thee. Be Zeus,
Highest and best of gods, my witness first—
And this same hearth, unstained Odysseus' hearth,
Where I am come—that as I tell thee, all
These things shall be fulfilled. This very year
Odysseus shall come hither, even while
The old moon wanes and the new moon is born.'

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
'O stranger, would thy word might be fulfilled !
Then shouldst thou know from me such loving-kindness
And straightway gifts so many, that whoever
Met thee would call thee blest. But on this wise
My heart forebodes, and thus it shall betall.
Never again shall come Odysseus home,
Nor thou find convoy ! Since there are not now
Such masters in the house as was Odysseus
Once among men—if e'er indeed he lived—
At welcoming or speeding honoured guests.
But still, my maidens, wash the stranger's feet,
And spread his couch, the bedstead and the bedding
And flossy blankets, so that he may come
In warmth and comfort to the gold-throned Dawn,
And on the morn, right early, bathe and rub him
With oil, that seated by Telemachus
He may take food here in the hall at home ;
Worse shall it be for anyone among them

Who out of malice hurts this stranger ; he
Shall do himself no good in future here,
No, not for all his rage. For how shalt thou
Discern of me, if I at all excel
In sense and judgment other women, stranger,
If unrefreshed and miserably clad,
Thou sittest in my hall at meat ? Man's life
Is brief enough ; and if a man be hard
And think hard thoughts, then all men cry a curse
Upon him living, and insult him dead ;
But if a man is stainless in himself
And in his thoughts, then strangers spread his fame
Around the whole wide world, and many men
Call him a gentleman.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' O honoured lady of Laertes' son,
Indeed, but coverings and flossy blankets
I have no taste for, ever since I left
The snowy hills of Crete, and went away
Aboard my long-oared ship. No, I will lie
As through the sleepless nights of old I used
To rest ; for I have lain full many nights
On a foul bed, awaiting bright-throned Dawn.
And washings of the feet give me no pleasure,
Nor will I let a woman touch my feet
Of all the handmaids serving in thy house,
Unless there is some old true-hearted woman
Whose heart has borne as many pains as mine ;
I would not mind if such a one touched my feet.'

Then wise Penelope spake again to him :
' Dear guest, for ne'er hath man discreet as thou
Come to my house, of strangers from afar,
Nor yet more welcome, seeing that thy words
Are all so wise and thoughtful—yea, I have
An old handmaid of understanding heart,

Who nursed and tended well my hapless lord
And took him in her arms the very hour
His mother bare him. She shall wash thy feet,
Though she be feeble. Up, wise Eurycleia,
Wash this man's feet ; he is thy master's peer,
And like this man's must be Odysseus' feet
And like to his, his hands ; for in misfortune
Men age so quickly.'

So said she, and the old wife hid her face
And shed hot tears, and spake in lamentation :

' Woe is me, child, that I can help thee not !
Above all men must Zeus have hated thee,
God-fearing though thou wert ! For no man ever
Burned unto Zeus, who loves the thunder-stroke,
Fat thigh-strips or choice hecatombs so many
As thou didst give him, with a prayer to reach
A sleek old age and rear thy glorious son.
And now he hath cut off from thee alone
The day of thy return !

' Ah yes, at him likewise have women mocked
In some strange far-off country, when he came
To some great house, just as these hussies here
Are mocking all at thee ! Thou wouldst avoid
Their taunts and many gibes, and so refusest
To let them wash thy feet. But I am ready,
And wise Penelope, Icarius' daughter,
Hath bid me. Therefore will I wash thy feet,
Both for her special sake and for thine own,
Because my heart within is stirred with sorrows.
But come now, mark the word that I shall speak.
Hither have come a many way-worn strangers,
But I aver that never have I seen
A man, in form and voice and feet, so like
As thou art like Odysseus.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :

‘ Old wife, so all men say who saw us both,
That we were marvellously like each other,
Exactly as thou hast observed and said.’

Then the old woman took the shining cauldron
From which she was about to wash his feet ;
In it she poured abundance of cold water
And then she mixed warm water with it. Now
Odysseus sate him down beside the hearth ;
But suddenly he turned him toward the shadow,
For then and there his heart had a foreboding
That as she touched him she might recognize
A certain scar, and all the truth be known.
So she came near her lord to bathe his feet ;
And instantly she knew the scar—a wound
Which long ago a boar with his white tusk
Had dealt him, in Parnassus, when he paid
A visit to his mother’s noble father,
Autolycus, and his sons ; which same outdid
All men in theft and lying ; ’twas a god,
Hermes himself, had given him this skill,
For unto him he burned sweet sacrifices
Of kids’ and lambs’ thigh-pieces. So the god
Abetted him with zeal. Autolycus
Once came to the rich land of Ithaca,
And found his daughter’s son a babe new-born ;
And on his knees, just as he finished supper,
Lo, Eurycleia laid the child, and said :
‘ Autolycus, find now thyself a name
To give thy child’s own child ; for much, I know,
Hath he been prayed for.’

Then spake Autolycus and answered her :
‘ My son-in-law and daughter, give the child
Whatever name I say. Lo, inasmuch
As I came hither wroth with many men
Ay, women too, over the fruitful earth,

So name the boy Odysseus, "Man of wrath".
And for my part, when he is grown, and comes
To the great palace of his mother's kin,
Ay, to Parnassus, where my treasures are,
Will I give him thereof, and send him back
Rejoicing.'

So to Autolycus Odysseus went
To get the splendid gifts. He and his sons
Met him with hand-grips and with gentle words.
Amphithea, his mother's mother hugged him,
And kissed him on his face and his fine eyes.
Autolycus called out to his brave sons
To have a meal prepared ; and they obeyed
His call. They brought in presently a bull,
A five-year-old ; and him they skinned and dressed,
And cut the limbs all up and chopped them small,
Like men who knew their work, and spitted them
And roasted them with care, and shared the portions.
So all day long till set of sun they feasted,
And all were sated with the equal feast ;
But when the sun set and the dark came on,
Then they lay down and took the gift of sleep.

But soon as early rosy-fingered Dawn
Appeared, they all went forth to hunt, the princes
Together with their dogs, and with them went
The good Odysseus. Up the steep they climbed
Of forest-clad Parnassus, and ere long
Came to the windy gulleys. Now the sun
From out deep Ocean's softly-flowing stream
Had hardly struck the fields, when on a glade
The beaters came. In front of them the dogs
Went hunting on a trail, and after them
The princes, and together with them, close
Behind the dogs, shaking his long-limbed spear,
Strode good Odysseus. There in a thick lair

A mighty boar was lying. Through that shelter
No wet winds ever blew, nor the bright sun
Beat with his rays, nor shower of rain could pierce,
So thick it was, and lined with plenteous litter
Of fallen leaves. Now on the boar there came
The trampling of the feet of men and dogs,
As they pressed on the hunt. Leaving his lair,
His hackles bristling and his eyes afire,
He stood at bay before them. First of all
Dashed in Odysseus, his long spear up-raised
In his strong hand, all eagerness to stick him ;
Yet was the boar too quick, and charging sideways
Cut him above the knee and with his tusk
Gashed deep into the flesh, but failed to reach
The bone of the man. Odysseus with good aim
Stabbed him on his right shoulder, and clean through
Went the bright spear-point. With a squeal the boar
Fell in the dust and his life sped away.
Then o'er the beast Autolycus' own sons
Made busy, and like men who knew their work
Bound up the wound of godlike good Odysseus,
And stayed the dark blood with an incantation,
And came back straight to their dear father's house.
And when Autolycus, he and his sons,
Had healed him well, they gave him splendid gifts,
And sent him quickly back well-satisfied
To his dear native country, Ithaca.
Then were his father and his lady mother
Glad at his coming home, and questioned him
About it all. 'How had he got his wound ?'
And he related duly, how out hunting
The boar had gashed him with his gleaming tusk,
When with the sons of king Autolycus
He went unto Parnassus.

Now when the old wife took the scar-marked limb

Between her palms, she knew it by the touch,
And let the foot fall down. Odysseus' knee
Dropped in the basin, and the brazen vessel
Rang and was tilted over, and the water
Was spilt upon the ground. Then joy and sorrow
Came on her both together, and her eyes
Were full of tears, and her swift speech was stayed ;
Yet as she touched Odysseus' chin, she said :

‘ In very truth, dear child, thou art Odysseus !
And yet till now I knew thee not, e'en I,
Till I had handled all my master's body.’

With that, she looked toward Penelope,
Longing to signal to her that her husband
Was in the house. Howbeit Penelope
Could neither meet her eye nor notice her,
Because Athene bent her mind elsewhere.
But, feeling for the woman's throat, Odysseus
Gripped it in his right hand, and with the left
He dragged her nearer him, and said to her :
‘ Why, Nanny, dost thou wish to ruin me ?
There at thy breast thyself thou nursedst me,
Who now am come after much grievous toil
To mine own country in the twentieth year !
But since thou hast detected me—indeed
Some god has put it in thy heart—be silent,
That no one else inside the house may know !
For this will I aver, and in good truth
So shall it be accomplished ; if a god
Subdue the haughty suitors unto me,
I will not spare thee, though thou art my nurse,
When in my halls I slay the other maids.’

Thereon wise Eurycleia answered him :
‘ My child, what word is this that has escaped
The barrier of thy teeth ! Thou know'st how stiff
And stern my spirit is ; I will be close

As stubborn stone or iron. One thing more
Will I say ; do thou mind it. If a god
Subdue the haughty suitors unto thee,
Thereafter will I name by name to thee
The women in the halls, and which of them
Dishonour thee, and which are innocent.'

' Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' Now, Nanny, why tell tales of them ? No need
For that ! For I will mark them well myself
And come to know each one. No, keep thy speech
Unsaid, and leave the issue to the gods.'

So said he. Through the hall the old wife went
To fetch fresh water for his feet, for all
The first was spilt. Now soon as she had washed
And rubbed him well with oil, he drew his seat
More closely to the fire to warm himself
Again, and with his rags he hid the scar.

Then first spake wise Penelope and said :
' My guest, I have a little matter further
To ask of thee ; for soon it will be time
For pleasant rest—at least for him on whom
Sweet sleep may come, distressful though he be.
But unto me the god has given sorrow
Ay, measureless ; for all day long, through all
My grief and moaning, yet I find relief
In seeing to my own tasks and my maids'
Inside the house ; but when night falls and sleep
Takes hold of all, upon my bed I lie
And keen regrets congest my throbbing heart,
And vex me in my grief. As sweetly sings
Pandareus' daughter, the pale nightingale,
When spring is newly come, as perched she sits
Amid the trees' thick leaves ; with turn and trill
She pours her throaty music of lament
For her dear Itylus, her son, whom once

She stabbed unwittingly, king Zethus' heir.
So to and fro, like her song, sways my soul.
Am I to tarry with my son and keep
All safe—possessions, slaves, and great tall house—
Paying respect unto my husband's bed,
And what the people say? Or shall I go
With whoso is the best of the Achæans
That courts me in my halls and offers gifts
Unnumbered? While my boy was but a child
Light-minded, 'twas impossible for me
To marry and to leave my husband's house;
But now he is big and come to man's estate,
He even urges me to go back home
And quit this house, being vexed about his substance
Which to his cost the Achæans are devouring.
But come now, listen to a dream I had,
And tell me what it means. I have at home
A score of geese, which come out of the water
And feed on grain; it gladdens me to watch them.
But from the hill there swooped a mighty eagle,
Hook-beaked, and brake their necks and killed them all;
And in a heap there in the house they lay.
While he to the bright sky went soaring up.
Thereat, though in a dream, I wept and wailed,
And round me thronged fair-haired Achæan women
As piteous moan I made, because the eagle
Had killed my geese. 'Then back he came and perched
Upon a jutting roof-beam, and he spake
With human voice, and stayed my lamentation:
“ Take courage, child of famed Icarius,
This is no dream; but 'tis a vision of good
That shall come true for thee. As for the geese,
They are the suitors; I, that was the eagle
Before, am now thy husband, come again
To loose a hideous death on all the suitors.”

' So said he, and sweet slumber let me go ;
And round I peered and recognized my geese
Indoors, and they were pecking at their grain
Beside the trough, just where they used to feed.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' O lady, 'tis impossible to bend
The dream aside and give it other meaning,
For lo, Odysseus, he himself hath shown thee
How he will make it good. It signifies
Doom for the suitors surely, one and all ;
Not one of them shall 'scape from death and fate.'

But wise Penelope answered him again :
' My guest, indeed but dreams are dubious
And dim of purport ; and by no means all
They promise men comes true. Twain are the gates
Of strengthless dreams ; and one is made of horn,
And one of ivory, and dreams that issue
Forth from the portal of sawn ivory,
These but deceive men, bearing empty words ;
But those emerging from the polished horn
Issue in truth, if anyone beholds them.
Not by that door, I think, came my queer dream ;
Glad for my son and me had it been then !
But I will tell thee one thing more ; do thou
Lay it to heart. The morn of evil name
Which is to cut me off from my lord's house
E'en now is nigh. For now I will appoint
A contest—of those axes, twelve in all,
Which he was wont to plant in lire indoors
Like ship-wright's trestles, and then stand far off
And shoot an arrow through them. I will set
This test before the suitors. Whosoe'er
Shall with his hands most lightly string the bow
And shoot an arrow through the dozen axes,
Him will I go with, and will quit this house,

My married home, so fair, so richly found ;
Indeed I think I shall remember it
Even in dreams sometimes.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' O honoured lady of Laertes' son,
Delay no more this trial in thy halls ;
I tell thee, deep Odysseus will be here,
Before these men, handling this polished bow,
String it and shoot an arrow through the iron.'

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
' My guest, if thou wert willing to sit by me
And cheer me here in hall, never should sleep
Drop on my lids. But 'tis not possible
That men should go for ever without sleep ;
For unto mortal men that live on earth,
The grain-giver, the immortals have appointed
For everything a proper time. Well, I
Will go upstairs and lay me on my bed,
Which has become for me a bed of sorrow
Continually watered by my tears,
E'er since the day Odysseus went to see
Black Ilios, that never should be named.
There will I lay me down ; but do thou lie
Here in the house, and either spread thee bedding
Upon the floor or let the servants set
A bedstead for thee.'

With that she climbed to her bright upper room,
And not alone ; her handmaids went with her ;
And having gone, she and her maids, upstairs,
She mourned Odysseus, her dear husband, till
Athene cast sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

BOOK XX

But he, the good Odysseus, laid him down
In the fore-hall. He spread a raw ox-hide
Beneath, and on it many skins of sheep,
The sheep which the Achæans used to slay,
And then as he lay down Eurynome
Threw over him a cloak.

There, thinking evil thoughts against the suitors,
Odysseus lay unsleeping. And the women
Came from their quarters, who before were wont
To wanton with the suitors, and they made
Laughter and merriment among themselves.
But in his breast Odysseus' heart was stirred
And much he communed with his mind and heart :

‘Now shall I dash at them and deal out death
To each of them, or suffer them to lie
With the proud suitors for the last, last time ?’

And sullenly his heart within him growled ;
Just as a bitch stands over her soft pups,
Growling to see a man she does not know,
And wants to fight him, so his heart within
Growled in resentment of their naughty deeds.
He smote his breast and chid his heart, and said :

‘Endure, my heart ; once a worse thing than this
Endure thou didst, on that day when the Cyclops
In his wild rage devoured my mighty comrades.
But still thou didst endure, until my craft
Got thee a way out of the cave, where thou
Thoughtest to die.’

So said he, gripping his own heart inside him ;
And in obedience to him his heart

Abode unshook ; but he himself lay tossing
This way and that. As when a man keeps turning
Before a great hot fire a haggis stuffed
With blood and fat, intent to cook it quickly.
So did Odysseus toss from side to side
Debating how, one man against so many,
He might lay hands upon the shameless suitors.
Then came Athene down from heaven, and drew
Near by him in the likeness of a woman,
And stood above his head and spake to him :

‘ Why wakest thou again, O man unlucky
O’er all men living ? Lo, this is thy home,
And here within thy home thy wife and son ;
And such a son as men might pray to have.’

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
‘ Ay, goddess, all this thou hast said aright.
But yet my heart is havoring somewhat in me,
How to lay hands upon the shameless suitors ;
I am but one, while they are in a pack
Always indoors. Moreover in my mind
I ponder one thing more, a harder thing.
Suppose that by the will of Zeus and thine
I were to slay them, whither should I flee
And get me clear ? I bid thee look to this.’

Then the keen-eyed Athene answered him :
‘ O hard of faith ! Why, many a man puts trust
In friend more weak than I am, one who is
Mortal and knoweth no such craft as mine.
I am a goddess ; through all kinds of toil
I guard thee to the very end. Lo, I
Will tell thee plain. If fifty companies
Of mortal men stood round about us, lusting
To slay us in the fight, yet shouldest thou
Drive off their kine and goodly sheep for spoil.
But now let sleep come o’er thee ; for to watch

All night on guard, that too is an annoy ;
But very soon shalt thou be out of trouble.'

So saying she dropped sleep upon his lids,
But she herself, that radiant goddess, went
Back to Olympus.

While sleep that slacks men's limbs took hold of him
And loosed his cares of soul, his faithful wife
Awoke, and sate on her soft bed and wept.
But when her heart had had its fill of weeping,
To Artemis first that star of women prayed :

'Dread goddess Artemis, thou maid of Zeus,
Would that this very hour thou mightest fix
Thine arrow in my breast and take my life !
Or else I would a storm might snatch me up
And sweep me hence a-down the murky ways,
And cast me forth into the outgoings
Of backward-flowing Ocean ; as when once
'The storm-winds bore Pandareus' daughters off.
The gods had slain their parents, and at home
Were they left orphaned ; Aphrodite fair
Stayed them with curds and honey and sweet wine,
And Here gave them over all their kind
Wisdom and beauty, and white Artemis
Made them grow stately, and Athene trained them
To mastery of noble crafts. But while
Fair Aphrodite was upon her way
To high Olympus to implore the crown
Of happy marriage for the maids (she went
To Zeus the thunder-lord, for well he knows
All things—the happiness and haplessness
Alike of mortal men) in that same hour
The spirits of the storm bore off the girls
And gave them to the horrible Avengers
To serve them. Even so I would that they
Who have Olympus for their habitation

Would blot me out, or fair-haired Artemis
Would smite me, so that dreaming on Odysseus
I might depart, yea, 'neath the hateful earth,
Nor ever make a meaner man's heart glad !
Ah well, a tolerable woe hath he,
Whoever weeps all day with heart sore vexed,
But falls asleep o' nights ; for sleep makes us
Forget all things, both good and bad, when once
It folds the eyelids. But to me the god
Sends evil dreams as well : for this same night
I dreamt there lay beside me one like him,
Such as he was when with the host he went ;
And then my heart rejoiced, because I thought it
A gleam of truth at last, and not a dream.'

E'en as she spake, came Dawn the golden-throned.
But good Odysseus heard her as she wept,
And fell a-musing, and to him it seemed
That even now she knew him, and was standing
Beside his head. Then gathering up the fleeces
And cloak whereon he lay, he set them down
Upon a chair in hall, and carried out
The hide and laid it down ; and lifted up
His hands and prayed to Zeus :

'O Father Zeus, if of good will ye gods
Have led me home o'er dry land and wet seas
When ye had plagued me sore, let one of these
Who are awake utter some word of omen
For me indoors, and out of doors likewise
Let there be manifest some sign from Zeus.'

So spake he praying. Zeus the counsellor
Heard him, and from Olympus dazzling-bright
Thundered at once on high out of the mists,
And glad was good Odysseus. And the word
Of omen from within came from a woman
Grinding close by, where stood the master's mills ;

And at those mills in all a dozen women
Toiled, making meal of barley and of wheat,
The pith of men. Now all the rest were sleeping,
For they had ground their grain, but one alone
Not yet had ceased, being weakest of them all.
She stopped her grindstone now and spake a word,
An omen to her master :

‘ O Father Zeus, king of both gods and men,
Loud was thy thunder from a starry sky,
And yet a cloud nowhere ! Sure, ’tis a sign
Thou showest someone. Now, for luckless me,
Fulfil likewise the word that I shall speak.
This very day may all the suitors take
Their joyous banquet for the last, last time
Within Odysseus’ halls ! They that have loosed
My knees with bitter toil to grind them meal,
Now may they sup their last ! ’

So said she ; and her presage and Zeus’ thunder
Made good Odysseus happy, for he thought
That he had gotten vengeance on the guilty.

Now through Odysseus’ pleasant house were gathered
The other serving-maids, and they were kindling
The tireless fire upon the hearth. From bed
Arose Telemachus, that godlike man,
And clothed himself about ; his biting sword
He slung around his shoulder, and he tied
His goodly sandals on his shining feet ;
And took his mighty spear with point of bronze,
And went and stood upon the threshold, calling
To Eurycleia :

‘ That stranger, Nanny, have ye honoured him
With bed and food within, or doth he lie
Untended anyhow ? For all her sense,
That is just like my mother ! Casually
She shows regard for any man of men

However undeserving, but the better
She sends away unhonoured.'

Then prudent Eurycleia answered him :
' Child, she is blameless, blame her not in this.
For while he would, he sate and drank his wine ;
For food, he said, he had no appetite ;
Thy mother asked him. Then when he was ready
To think of rest and sleep, she told the maids
To spread his bed, but he, as one fordone
With woe and sorrow, would not sleep a-bed
And under rugs, but lay in the fore-hall
Upon an undressed hide and skins of sheep ;
And over him we threw a cloak.'

She spake : and through the hall Telemachus
Passed, spear in hand, and with him two swift dogs.
To the assembly-place he made his way
And joined the mailed Achæans ; but the nurse,
Daughter of Ops, Peisenor's son, good lady,
Called to her maids and said :

' Come, some of you, get busy ! Sweep the hall
And sprinkle it, and o'er the well-made seats
Throw purple covers ; some of you with sponges
Wipe all the tables down, and clean the bowls
And well-wrought double cups ; go, some of you,
Fetch water from the spring and bring it quickly.
The suitors will not stay away from hall
Much longer, but will very soon be back,
Because it is a public festival.'

So said she, and they listened and obeyed
Right quickly. To the dark spring twenty went ;
The rest remained behind there, and were busy,
Like folk who knew their work, about the house.

In came the serving-men of the Achæans,
Then well and skilfully they split the logs ;
And from the fountain came the women back.

The swineherd was the next to come : he brought
Three boars which were the best of all his herd ;
And these he loosed to graze in the fine courts,
While he himself spake softly to Odysseus :

‘ Well, stranger, do the Achæans look on thee
With any more regard, or do they scorn thee
In hall, as hitherto ? ’

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ O that the gods, Eumæus, might avenge
The violence wherewith these bullies plan
Their wicked follies in another’s house,
And have no place for shame ! ’

So talked they two together. Now there came
Melanthius goatherd near them, and he brought
The goats that were the best in all the herds,
To make the suitors’ dinner ; and behind him
Two shepherds came. So he tied up the goats
Beneath the echoing portico, and then
Himself insultingly addressed Odysseus :

‘ What, stranger, still infesting us in hall,
Begging of men, and wilt not get thee gone ?
I see no sort of prospect of our parting
Till we have tasted one another’s fists.
Thy begging is indecent ; and besides,
The Achæans dine elsewhere, not here alone.’

So said he : deep Odysseus answered him
Never a word, but shook his head in silence,
And deep within his heart he brooded evil.

To them there came a third, Philœtius,
Masterful man. He drove up for the suitors
A barren heifer and some fat she-goats ;
And ferry-men, whose office is to carry
All men across—ay, whoso comes to them—
Had brought them from the mainland to the island.
The beasts he tethered carefully beneath

The echoing portico, and then himself
Came close, and fell to questioning the swineherd :

‘ Who is this stranger, swineherd, newly come
Here to our house ? Of what men doth he claim
Descent ? His kinsmen and his native fields,
Where are they ? Luckless man ! And yet he looks
Like a prince royal ; but on wandering men
The gods bring sorrow, since for even kings
They spin the threads of trouble.’

He spake, and coming near saluted him
With his right hand, and then addressing him
Spake wingéd words :

‘ Greeting, old stranger, and in after days
May happiness be thine, albeit now
Thou art oppressed by many miseries !
O Father Zeus, no other god than thou
Works greater hurt ! Thou hast no ruth that men,
Men of thine own begetting, should be mated
With evil and sharp pains. I brake out sweating
As I discerned this man, and mine eyes swim
To think upon Odysseus ; for I wot
That he too clad in sorry rags like these
Roams among men, if yet indeed he lives
And sees the sunlight. But if he is dead
Already and abides in Hades’ house,
O woe is me then for unstained Odysseus,
Who set me, being still a boy, to keep
His cattle in the Cephallenians’ land !
And now they wax past count ; in better sort
Could no man see his breed of broad-faced cattle
Increase for him like corn ; these are the beasts
That strangers order me to drive along
For them to dine on ! Not a whit they heed
The heir who sits at home, nor apprehend
The vengeance of the gods : so keen they are

Already to divide among themselves
Our absent lord's possessions. But for me,
My heart within keeps turning o'er this matter.
'Twere very wrong, while yet his son is living,
To go away and hie me, cows and all,
To a strange land and unto alien folk ;
Yet this is harder, to be so unhappy
Abiding here in charge of kine that have
Passed into others' power. Ay, long ago
I would have fled for shelter to some other
Proud prince, for things are past endurance now ;
But still I think of that ill-fated man,
If he might come, I know not whence, and make
A scattering of the suitors through the house.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Thou seemest, cowherd, neither knave nor fool ;
Yes, of myself I see how thou hast gotten
Wisdom of mind ; therefore will I speak out,
And swear a solemn oath upon it too !
Now be my witness Zeus, above all gods,
And this the hospitable board and hearth,
Which I have reached, unstained Odysseus' hearth :
While thou art here Odysseus shall come home :
And thine own eyes shall, if thou wilt, behold
The suitors being slain who lord it here.'

Then he that kept the cattle answered him :
' Stranger, I would the son of Cronos might
Fulfil this word of thine ! So shouldst thou see
How strong I am and how my hands obey.'

So too Eumæus prayed to all the gods
That wise Odysseus might come home again.

One to another so they talked ; meanwhile
The suitors made their plans to kill and slay
Telemachus. But on the left they saw
A bird, a lofty flying eagle, come

Clutching a shrinking dove. Amphinomus
At that harangued them, and he spake and said :
‘ My friends, this plan of ours will not run smooth ;
I mean the slaying of Telemachus.
Rather let us bethink us of the feast.’

So said he, and his word seemed good to them.
Into the palace of divine Odysseus
They passed, and laid their mantles on the chairs
And seats, and fell a-slaying the big sheep
And the fat goats ; ay, and they slaughtered too
Boar fatlings and the heiter of the herd.
They broiled the inner parts and served them out,
And mixed the wine in bowls ; and the swineherd
Served each man with a cup. Philoetius,
Masterful man, dealt out the bread to them
In shapely baskets, and Melanthius
Poured out the wine. So they put out their hands
‘ To take the good fare lying there before them.

And now Telemachus with deep design
Seated Odysseus by the threshold stone
Inside the well-built hall ; and placed for him
An uninviting stool and little table.
By him he set parts of the inner meat,
And poured him wine into a golden cup
And said to him :

‘ There sit thou down among the lords and drink
Thy wine, and I myself will keep from thee
The gibings and the blows of all the suitors ;
Because this is, I say, no public house ;
It is Odysseus’ house ; for me he won it.
But as for you, ye suitors, keep your thoughts
From taunts and blows. I do not want to see
A brawl or feud arise.’

So said he, and they bit their lips and all
Were struck with wonder at Telemachus,

That he so boldly spake. Then in their midst
Spoke out Antinous, Eupéithes' son :

‘ Hard though it be, Achæans, let us accept
This saying of Telemachus, although
His words to us are too much like a threat.
For Zeus Cronion did not suffer it,
Else had we muffled him indoors ere now,
Shrill talker though he is.’

So said Antinous, but Telemachus
Ignored his speech. Now through the city came
The heralds with the holy hecatomb ;
And the long-haired Achæans met beneath
The shadowed grove of Phœbus of the bow.

So when they had broiled and taken from the spits
The outer meats, they portioned out the shares
And made a splendid feast. And they that served
Set by Odysseus a like share to those
Which they received themselves : Telemachus,
Divine Odysseus' son, so ordered them.

But nowise would Athene let the suitors
Abstain from bitter outrage in their pride,
That in Laertian Odysseus' heart
The pang might strike yet deeper. Now there was
A certain lawless-minded man among them ;
Ctesippus was his name ; he lived in Same ;
Who trusting doubtless in his huge possessions
Courtèd Odysseus' wife, when he was gone
So long a time. This man it was who now
Addressed the haughty suitors :

‘ Hark, manly suitors ; I have a word to say.
This stranger hath for some time had his share,
And as is right, an equal share ; because
It is not fair nor just to disappoint
The heir-apparent's guests, whoe'er he be
That cometh to this house. Well then, I too

Will give this man a stranger's gift, that he
In turn may give the bath-woman a present,
Or any other of the slaves within
Divine Odysseus' house.'

So saying, from the platter where it lay
He seized a bullock's hoof, and with strong hand
He hurled it. But Odysseus dodged the cast
With quick shift of the head ; and in his heart
He smiled a right grim smile. 'The bullock's hoof
Hit the stout wall.

Thereon Telemachus attacked Ctesippus :
' For thy soul's vantage, sir, 'tis better so—
Thou didst not hit the stranger ! He contrived
To dodge thy cast. Else, be thou sure, would I
Have cleft thy midriff with my pointed spear,
And, for a wedding feast, thy father here
Would have been busied with a funeral.
Wherefore let no man in this house, I say,
Make a display of unbecoming deeds.
For now I know and understand all things,
Both good and bad ; I was a child before.
But yet, as needs we must, we still endure
To watch the spectacle of butchered sheep,
Wine drunk, and bread devoured. Hard it is
For one man to restrain a crowd ! But come,
Harm me no more out of your wicked hearts ;
Yet, if ye still are set on slaying me,
I would prefer e'en that ! Far better die
Than stand and watch these scandals going on—
Guests rudely handled, and in shameless sort
Men dragging handmaids through a decent house.'

So said he, and on all dead silence fell ;
But Agelaus Damastorides
Among them spake at last :

' After so just a speech, my friends, no man

Surely need be annoyed nor answer back
With jangling words. Misuse ye not this stranger,
Nor any of the slaves within the house
Of heaven-born Odysseus. Yet would I
Speak to Telemachus and to his mother
One gentle word, if it may find perchance
In both their minds acceptance. While your hearts
Within you had a hope that wise Odysseus
Might yet come home, so long your gaining time,
Your holding back the suitors in the house,
These were no blame in you ; for if he had
Come and returned and reached his home again
It had been better so. But manifest
At last it is—he will return no more !
Go then, sit by thy mother ; tell her this :
That she must wed whichever man is best
And brings most presents ; to the end that thou
Mayst peacefully possess thy heritage
Intact, and eat and drink, while she is keeping
Another's house.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
'Nay now, by Zeus and my unhappy father,
Who somewhere far from Ithaca has perished
Or goes a-wandering, I am not delaying
The marriage of my mother, Agelaus !
With whomsoe'er she will, I bid her wed,
And therewithal I offer gifts past count.
But 'gainst her will I am ashamed to drive her
Out of the house with a peremptory word.
May God forbid that that should ever be !'

So said Telemachus. But 'mid the suitors
Athena roused laughter unquenchable,
And turned their wits a-wandering. Now they laughed
With alien jaws : the very meat they ate,
Dribbled with blood ; their eyes were filled with tears,

Their soul was fain of wailing. Then there spake
Theoclymenus the godlike in their midst :

‘ Ah, wretched men ! What curse has come upon you ?
A shroud of night is o’er your heads and faces,
Yea, down unto your knees ; a wail goes up
Like fire, and cheeks are wet with tears ; and blood
Is spotted o’er the walls and the fair beams.
The porch is full—the courts are full—of ghosts
Stampeding Hell-ward down into the gloom ;
The sun hath perished wholly out of heaven,
And over all hath run an evil mist.’

So said he ; and they all laughed merrily
To hear him, and there spake among them first
Eurymachus, the son of Polybus :

‘ Quite mad he is, this stranger newly come
From foreign parts ! Quick, put him out, my lads,
To find his way to the assembly-place,
Since here he seems to find it dark as night.’

Then the godlike Theoclymenus replied :
‘ Eurymachus, I do not bid thee give me
Guides for my going ! I have eyes and ears
And my two feet, and in my heart a purpose
Of no mean mettle tempered. With their help
Go forth I will, because I see disaster
Coming on you, which not a single suitor
Shall ’scape or shun, out of you all who here
Within the palace of divine Odysseus
Mishandle men and plan your wicked follies.’

With that he passed out from the stately halls
And went unto Piræus, who received him
With welcome. But the suitors one and all,
Glancing at one another, tried to vex
Telemachus by laughing at his guests.
And thus would some one of the proud youths say :

‘ Worst luck of all men in thy guests hast thou,

Telemachus ! What sort of man is this
Voracious vagabond thou keepest here,
Demanding bread and wine, unskilled to work
Or fight, and just a cumberer of the ground !
And there again that other man stood up
To play the seer ! If only thou wouldst listen
To me, there would be much more money in it.
Aboard a galley let us throw these strangers,
And ship them to the folk of Sicily,
Whence they would earn thee quite a decent price.'

So spake the suitors ; but he heeded not,
And silently kept looking to his father
Waiting expectantly the hour when he
Should lay his hands upon the shameless suitors.

But wise Penelope, Icarius' daughter,
Had set her chair of state right opposite,
And heard the talk of each man in the halls.
For 'mid their jesting they had gotten ready
The midday dinner, sweet and satisfying,
Since they had slain so many beasts. Yet never
Could there be grimmer supper than the one
Which soon a goddess and a man of might
Were like to set before them ; since the suitors
Without excuse were plotting deeds of shame.

BOOK XXI

Now keen-eyed Pallas put it in the mind
Of wise Penelope, Icarius' daughter,
To set the bow and the grey iron axes
Before the suitors in Odysseus' hall,
For contest, and the overture of death.
Up the tall stairway to her room she climbed
And took in her strong hand a curving key,
A goodly key of bronze, with ivory haft.
Then with her handmaids on her way she went
To the secluded store-room, wherein lay
Her husband's treasures, bronze and gold and iron
Hard-wrought. And there they lay—the back-bent bow
And quiver for the arrows ; and it held
Many woe-dealing shafts. A friend of his
Who met him once in Sparta gave him these,
One Iphitus, a man like the immortals,
The son of Eurytus. They twain had met
Each other in Messene at the house
Of wise Ortilochus. Indeed Odysseus
Had gone there to collect a debt—a due
From all the people ; for Messene's men
Had lifted out of Ithaca in their galleys
Three hundred sheep, ay, and their shepherds too.
In quest of these then had Odysseus come
On a far embassy while yet a lad,
Sent by his father and the other elders.
But Iphitus was seeking some lost horses,
A dozen mother-mares, with sturdy mules
At teat ; and in the end these very mares
Turned out his death and portion, when he had

Come to the hardy-hearted son of Zeus,
The hero Heracles, who was a party
To monstrous doings, and without remorse
Slew him within his house, guest though he was,
Respecting not the vengeance of the gods
Nor yet the board which he had spread for him ;
But slew the man himself, and in his stalls
Retained the strong-hoofed mares. In search of these
Came Iphitus, when meeting with Odysseus
He gave to him this bow, which on a time
Great Eurytus had borne, and at his death
Had left unto his son in his tall house.
And unto Iphitus Odysseus gave
A biting sword and mighty spear, as earnest
Of hearty friendship ; but they never knew
Each other at the table ; for ere that
Zeus' son slew Iphitus Eurytides,
That godlike man, the same who gave Odysseus
The bow ; which bow the good Odysseus never
Would carry with him when he went to war
On the black ships, but in his halls at home,
Memento of a kindly friend, it lay ;
But he would carry it in his own land.

Now when that wondrous lady reached the store room
And stepped upon the oaken threshold, which
Of old a carpenter had deftly planed
And straightened to the line—and thereto he
Had fitted doorposts, and upon them set
Bright doors—at once she quickly loosed the strap
From the door-handle, and thrust in the key
And with nice aim shot back the bolts. And even
As grazing in the mead a bull will bellow,
So rumbled the good doors at the key's push,
And opened to her quickly. Then she stepped
On the raised platform where the coffer stood

In which the perfumed robes were stored, and thence
Reaching her hand out, from its peg she took
The bow in the bright case which guarded it.
There sate she down and laid it on her knees,
And cried and wept aloud, as she took out
Her husband's bow. But when she had had her fill
Of tears and wailing, to the hall she went,
To the proud suitors, bearing in her hand
The back-bent bow, the quiver for the arrows,
And in the quiver many woful shafts.
And by her side her maidens bore a chest
Wherein there lay great store of bronze and iron,
The prizes that her lord had won in combat.
Now when that star of women reached the suitors,
By the main post of the strong roof she paused,
Holding her shining veil before her face ;
And either side of her a faithful maid
Stood by. Then straight she said unto the suitors :

‘ Listen, proud suitors, who have set yourselves
To eat and drink this house up without end,
For that its lord is long since gone away ;
Nor had ye other pretext to put forward,
Only your wish to marry me and make
A wife of me. No, no ! See now, ye suitors,
Since here before you is disclosed your prize,
I tender you divine Odysseus' bow—
A mighty bow—and whosoever shall
String it of his own strength most easily
And shoot an arrow through the whole twelve axes,
Him will I go with, and will quit this house,
My married home, so fair, so richly found ;
Indeed I think I shall remember it
Even in dreams sometimes.’

With that she bade Eumæus, the good swineherd,
Make over to the suitors bow and axes

Of iron grey. Eumæus, all in tears,
Took them and laid them down ; and in his place
The neatherd wept to see his master's bow ;
Whereat Antinous rebuked them saying :

‘ You silly hinds who cannot think beyond
To-day ! Why are ye weeping, wretched pair,
And stirring up this lady's soul within her ?
Her spirit lies in grief enough already,
Since she has lost the husband whom she loved.
No, go and eat in silence, or get out
And weep outside, and leave the bow just there—
A fateful trial for the suitors, since
Not easily, I think, this polished bow
Will let itself be strung. ’Mid all these here
There is no man such as Odysseus was ;
I saw him once myself ; yes, I remember,
Though I was still a child.’

He spake, but in his inmost heart he hoped
To string the bow and shoot clean through the axes ;
And yet he was to be the first to taste
An arrow from unstained Odysseus' hands,
Whom from his seat in hall he had but late
Been scorning, and inciting all the others.

Then said to them the strong Telemachus :
‘ Why, what a fool hath Zeus Cronion made me !
My mother dear, wise as she is, declares
That she will go with some new mate, and quit
This house ; and yet I laugh and am well-pleased
In my mad mind ! Come, suitors,*since your prize
Is here disclosed, a dame the like of whom
There is not now in the Achæan land,
Nor sacred Pylos, Argos, or Mycenæ,
Nor in this Ithaca, nor the mainland dark ;
Yourselves ye know it—is there need for me
To praise my mother ? Now, no putting off

With your excuses ! Turn away no more
From bending of the bow, that we may see.
Yea, and I too would like to try the bow.
If I can string it and can shoot an arrow
Clean through the axes, then my lady mother
Might leave the house and go with some new mate
Without my grieving ; since I should be left,
And should have shown my competence at last
To win my father's goodly battle-prizes.'

He spake, and springing to his height let go
The scarlet mantle from his neck, and laid
His keen sword from his shoulders. First he planted
The axes, having dug one good long trench
To hold them all, and made it straight by line,
And stamped the earth in round them. And amazement
Took all who watched him, that he set them out
So neatly, never having seen it done.
Then going and standing on the threshold he
Began to try the bow. He made it tremble
Thrice in his eagerness to draw it ; thrice
He slacked his effort, though at heart he hoped
To stretch the string and shoot clean through the axes.
And now he might have strung it in his strength
At the fourth pull, but that Odysseus nodded
'No, no !' and checked him, eager though he was.

Then spake again the strong Telemachus ;
'O what a thought, that all my days I must
Be useless and unmanly ! Or, maybe,
I am too young and cannot trust my hands
As yet to keep off unprovoked assailants.
But ye, who are more mighty men than I,
Come, try the bow, and let us end the contest.'

So saying, on the floor he laid aside
The bow and propped it up against the doors
Smooth and close-fitting, and the arrow swift

He leaned there too against the fine bow-tip ;
And sate him down again upon the seat
Whence he had risen up.

Then said Antinous, Eupèithes' son,
Among them : ' Stand up, all the company,
In order from the left to right, beginning
From where the cup-bearer pours out the wine.'

So said he, and his saying pleased them well.
Then first uprose Leiodes, Oenops' son,
Who was their soothsayer. Always he used
To sit at the far end, by the fine bowl—
The only man who hated their excesses,
And felt resentment against all the suitors.
He then first took the bow and the swift shaft,
And going and standing on the threshold tried
The bow, but could not string it ; for ere that
His hands grew tired, his unworn, tender hands,
With pulling at it. So he said to them :

' Not I can string it ! Take it, someone else.
My friends, this bow shall rob a many princes
Of life and spirit ; since 'tis better far
To die, than live to fail of that for which
We go on gathering here expectantly
Day after day. Now there be those who hope
At heart and long to wed Penelope,
Odysseus' bed-mate ; but when such a one
Has tried the bow, and seen what he can do,
Thereafter let him seek and woo with gifts
Some other comely-robed Achæan woman.
Then should this lady wed whichever man
Makes her most gifts, and comes her fated mate.'

So saying on the floor he laid aside
The bow, and propped it up against the doors
Smooth and close-fitting, and the arrow swift
He leaned there too against the fine bow-tip ;

And sate him down again upon the seat
Whence he had risen up.

But in his scorn Antinous called to him :
' What word hath passed the barrier of thy teeth,
Leiodes ! 'tis a hard and grievous saying,
It angers me to hear—as if forsooth
A bow like this should rob of life and spirit
Our bravest—all because thou couldst not string it !
Why ? for thy lady mother did not bear thee
Of strength enough to draw a bow and shoot ;
But other lordly suitors soon will string it.'

At that he called Melanthius of the goats :
' Up now, Melanthius, light a fire in hall,
And put a big chair by it, and thereon
A fleece ; and bring out a great cake of lard
(There is a stock indoors) that we young men
May warm the bow and rub it with the fat,
And try it and conclude the contest.'

So said he, and Melanthius quickly lighted
The never-weary fire, and brought and set
A big chair by it with a fleece thereon.
And from within produced a great lard cake.
Therewith the young men warmed and tried the bow,
But could not string it. They were far too weak.
But still the leaders of the suitors tarried,
Antinous and godlike Eurymachus,
Who were in might by far the best of all.

Now from the house went forth in company
That other pair, the neatherd and the swineherd
Of great Odysseus ; and that goodly man
Went out himself behind them. But when they
Had now passed right beyond the gates and court,
He spake and hailed them in appealing words :

' Neatherd, and thou too swineherd, shall I speak,
Or keep it to myself ? My heart says " Speak ! "

What like of men would ye two be to help
Odysseus, if he came, I know not whence,
Thus in a flash, and some god brought him here ?
Say, would ye back the suitors, or Odysseus ?
Speak, as your heart and spirit bid you speak !'

Then he that kept the cattle answered him :
' O Father Zeus, that thou wouldst grant my prayer !
Ah, that yon man might come and some god guide him !
Then shouldst thou know what sort of strength is mine
And how my hands obey !'

So too Eumæus prayed to all the gods
That wise Odysseus to his home might come.

But when he knew the mind of them for certain,
Answer he made again and said to them :

' Home am I come, look you, my very self.
After much grievous labour am I come
To mine own country in the twentieth year.
I know that out of all my thralls you two
Alone desired my coming. Of the rest
I have not heard one pray that I might come
Back home upon my tracks. But unto you
Will I declare the truth, as it shall be.
Now if a god subdues the haughty suitors
Before me, I will bring you each a wife,
And give you property, and houses too
Built near mine own, and in mine eyes thenceforth
As friends and brothers of Telemachus
Ye both shall be. Come, what is more, I will
Show you besides a sign most manifest,
That ye may know me well and be assured
At heart—I mean the scar of this old wound
Which once a boar gave me with his white tusk
When with my mother's father's sons I went
Unto Parnassus.'

Then back he drew his rags from the great scar,

And when the twain had looked and marked it well,
They threw their arms about the wise Odysseus
And fell a-weeping, and in welcome kissed
His head and neck ; while in like fashion too
Odysseus kissed their heads and hands. And now
The sunlight would have set upon their sorrow,
Had he himself not checked them ; and he said :

‘ Cease weeping and bewailing, lest someone
Come out from hall and see, and make it known
To those within as well. But go ye in
One at a time, not all at once ; I first,
And you behind me ; then let there be made
This sign : the others, all the haughty suitors,
Will not let me be given the bow and quiver ;
But as thou carriest the bow through hall
My good Eumæus, put it in my hands ;
And tell the maids to bar the tight-set doors
Of the zenana, and if any hear
Groanings or din of men within our walls,
Let them not all rush out, but keep their place
In silence at their work. And upon thee,
My good Philœtius, I lay this charge,
To bolt and bar the courtyard outer gate,
And lash a cord about it very quick.’

With that he passed into the well-set house,
And sate down on the chair whence he had risen.
And his two servants came inside as well.

By now Eurymachus had the bow in hand,
And in the firelight he was warming it
This way and that ; yet so he could not string it.
Then in his pride of heart he groaned aloud,
And in annoyance spake and said to them :

‘ Deuce take it ! I am sorry for myself
And for you all. I do not mind so much
About the marriage (though that irks me too)

For there are many more Achæan ladies,
Some in this sea-girt Ithaca, and some
In other towns ; but I do mind if we
Come short so greatly of divine Odysseus
As not to have the strength to string his bow !
A shame it is for men unborn to hear of.'

Antinous, Eupeithes' son, replied :
' 'Twill not be so, Eurymachus ; and thou
Thyself must know it ! Through the land to-day
Is held the Bow-god's feast—a holy feast ;
Who would be bending bows ? Nay, put it by
And think of it no more. As for the axes,
What, if we let them all stand as they are ?
No one, I think, will come into the hall,
Odysseus' hall, and carry them away !
Come, let the butler pour into the cups
Libation drops, that after offering wine
We may lay by yon curving bow ; and bid
Melanthius the goatherd in the morning
Bring goats, of all his herds the very best,
That on the altar of Apollo Bowman
We may lay pieces of ^{the} thighs, and so
Make trial of the bow, and end the test.'

So said he, and his saying pleased them well.
Then serving-men poured water o'er their hands,
And pages crowned the mixing-bowls with drink,
And pouring first libations in the cups,
To each in turn served out. When they had poured
Libation, and had drunk to heart's content,
Then deep Odysseus said to them with guile :

' Hear me, ye suitors of the glorious queen,
That as my spirit bids me I may speak,
And mostly I beseech Eurymachus,
And this godlike Antinous, for he
Hath also spoke aright this word of his,

That ye quit shooting for a time, and leave
The issue to the gods ; and in the morning
To whomsoe'er he will the god will give
The victory. But give me the polished bow
That I may try my hands and strength with you,
To see if I have still such force as once
Lurked in my supple limbs, or if I have
Lost it ere now through wandering and bad food.'

So said he, and they all grew mighty angry,
For fear lest he should string the polished bow,
And in rebuke Antinous spake to him :

' O wretched stranger, hast thou ne'er a grain
Of sense ? Art not content to feast serenely
With us thy betters, and to get thy share,
And listen to our talk and conversation,
While no one else who is a guest or beggar
Can hear it ? 'Tis the wine that doth thee hurt,
Wine honey-sweet, which trips up others also,
Who gulp it down and do not drink to measure.
Yea, wine it was besotted e'en the Centaur
Eurytion the famous, in the hall
Of that great heart, Peirithous. He had gone
'To meet the Lapithæ, and when his wits
Were wild with wine offended like a madman
There in Peirithous' house. Disgust took all
The heroes ; up they leapt, and through the gate
They hauled him out, and with the savage sword
Cut off his ears and nose, and like a madman
He went his way bearing with him the burden
Of sins committed in his folly ; thence
The feud between the Centaurs and mankind
Arose, but first he found himself in trouble
Through being weighed with wine. And even so
Do I pronounce great harm for thee, if thou
Shalt string the bow. For thou shalt find no grace

From any of our people : we will send thee
In a black galley to king Echetus,
Who mangles all men, from whose hands thou shalt
Nowise be saved. Be quiet, drink thy wine,
And do not strive with younger men than thee.'

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
' It is not fair nor just, Antinous,
To rob my son's guests of their proper due,
Whoe'er he be that cometh to this house.
Canst thou imagine, if yon stranger, trusting
His hands and strength, should string the mighty bow,
Odysseus' bow, that he should lead me home
And make his wife of me ? I do not think
That he himself at heart has hopes of that !
Upon that score at least let none of you
Be fashed, as here ye feast ; for never, never
Could that be seemly.'

Eurymachus, the son of Polybus,
To her made answer : ' Wise Penelope,
Icarius' child, it is not that we think
This man will lead thee home—'twould be a scandal—
But that we dread the talk of men and women,
Lest some low fellow of the Achæans say
Hereafter : " Truly these who come a-wooing
A hero's wife are far worse men than he !
They cannot string his polished bow ; and yet
Another man, a roaming beggar, came
And lightly strung the bow and shot right through
The iron ! " In this fashion they will talk
And unto us it would become reproach.'

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
' Eurymachus, those cannot possibly
Enjoy a good report among the people,
Who eat a prince's house up in dishonour.
Why should ye deem this matter a reproach ?

'This stranger is right tall and strongly built,
And claims to be the son of a good father.
Come then, I say, give him the polished bow,
And let us see. For I will tell thee this—
And what I say shall surely be fulfilled—
If he shall string it, and Apollo grants him
His prayer, then I will clothe him in fair robes,
Tunic and cloak, and give him a sharp spear
To keep off dogs and men, and two-edged sword;
And sandals will I give him for his feet,
And send him wheresoe'er his heart and spirit
Bid him be gone.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to her :
'Mother o' mine, touching the bow, no man
Has better right than I of the Achæans
To give or to refuse it as I will—
Not all the chiefs of rocky Ithaca
Nor of the isles towards Elis, land of horses.
Not one of these shall force me 'gainst my will,
E'en if I choose once and for all to give
The bow unto this guest to bear away
With him. But do thou get thee to thy room,
And mind thine own concerns, the loom and spindle,
And bid thy maidens ply their tasks. Howbeit
The bow shall be for men—for all, but most
For me, since I am master in the house.'

Back to her room as one amazed she went
For to her heart she laid her son's wise words.
And to the upper chamber with her maids
She climbed, and there lamented her dear lord
Odysseus, till keen-eyed Athene shed
Sweet sleep upon her eyelids.

Now the good swincherd took the curving bow
And started carrying it, when all the suitors
Yelled at him in the hall; and thus would one

Of those proud gallants say :

‘ Where art thou off to with the curving bow,
Thou raving, wretched pig-man ? The swift dogs—
The dogs that thou hast bred—shall tear thee soon
There by thy pigs, alone, apart from men,
If but Apollo and the other gods
Who live for ever be benign to us.’

At that he laid down on the very spot
The bow he carried, being alarmed because
So many men yelled at him in the halls.

But on the other side Telemachus
Called out in threatening tone :
‘ Here, Daddy, bring the bow ! or thou wilt find
’Tis a mistake to serve too many masters !
Look out lest I, though not so old as thou,
Pursue thee to the field and stone thee, since
I am the better man. Yes, would I were
So much the mightier in strength of arm
Than all the suitors in the house, as I
Am mightier than thou ! Then would I soon
Send many a one upon a woful road
Forth from our house, for they imagine evil.’

So said he, and they all laughed merrily
At him ; in fact towards him they began
To slack their bitter anger. But the swineherd
Bore through the house the bow, and coming close
He put it in the hands of wise Odysseus.
Then forth he called the nurse and said to her :

‘ Telemachus, wise Eurycleia, bids* thee
Bar the close-fitting doors of the zenana.
If any of the women hear a sound
Of groans or din of men within our walls,
Command them not to rush out, but to bide
In their own place in silence at their work.’

So said he ; but her answer found no wings.

She barred the doors into the well-set rooms.

Then silently Philœtius sped forth
And barred the outer gates of the closed court.
Beneath the portico there lay a cable
Made out of byblus, from some curving ship ;
With this he lashed the gates ; and then went in
And came and sate upon the seat which he
Had left, and kept his eyes upon Odysseus.

Now he already had the bow in hand,
Turning it round and round and trying it
This way and that, to see if worms had eaten
The horns, while he, its master, was away.
And with a glance towards his neighbour thus
Would one man say :

‘ What a keen eye ! He knows the trick o’ the bow !
Why he himself must have a bow like this
Laid up at home, or else he is setting out
To make one, that he turns it thus in hand
Over and over, sharp old wandering rogue ! ’

‘ Then would another of the proud youths say :
‘ I wish him luck, the fellow, in such measure
As ever he succeeds in stringing it ! ’

So said the suitors ; but the deep Odysseus
As soon as he had handled the great bow
And conned it every way—as when a man
Skilled in the lyre and singing, easily
Tying the twisted sheep-gut either end,
Stretches a cord about a fresh-made peg—
So without effort did Odysseus string
That mighty bow. In his right hand he held it
And tried the string. Sweet to his touch it sang ;
Its tone was like a swallow’s. But there came
Great grief on all the suitors, and their faces
Were changed ; and Zeus sent a loud thunder-roll
For token. Then the sore-tried goodly man

Rejoiced, because deep-planning Cronos' son
Sent him a sign. He picked up a keen arrow
Which lay at hand upon the table, bare
(The others rested in the hollow quiver
Whereof the Achæans were to taste so soon) ;
He took it ; on the centre-piece he laid it ;
And even from the chair whereon he sate
He drew the string and arrow-notch, and loosed
The arrow with sure aim. He did not miss
One handle-tip of all the axes ; clean
Shot through and out the arrow weighed with bronze.
Then to Telemachus he said :

‘He brings no shame on thee, Telemachus,
The stranger seated in thy halls ! I have
In nowise missed my mark, nor laboured long
Stringing the bow. My strength is still unbroken,
Not as the suitors taunt me in their scorn.
But now 'tis time to get their supper too
For the Achæans (yes, before 'tis dark),
And after that must other sport be made
With song and lyre, for these things grace a feast.’

With that he nodded ; and Telemachus,
Divine Odysseus' loving son, girt on
His biting sword, and took his spear in hand,
And on his father's flank beside the chair
Stood, armed with flashing bronze.

BOOK XXII

Then deep Odysseus stripped him of his rags,
And sprang on the great threshold, with the bow
And quiver full of arrows ; and he poured
The speedy shafts out there before his feet,
And spake among the suitors :

‘ So at long last this fatal match is ended !
And now will I have at another mark,
Which never man has smitten, if maybe
I hit it and Apollo grant my prayer.’

He spake, and at Antinous he aimed
A bitter shaft. Now he was in the act
Of lifting up a fine two-eared gold cup,
And even handling it to drink his wine.
Death was not in his mind. For who among
His friends at meat would e’er suppose one man,
However strong he were, amid so many,
Would bring on him black fate and evil death ?
But taking aim Odysseus shot and struck him
Full in the throat, and through the tender neck
Clean passed the point, and on his side he sank.
The cup fell from his hand as he was hit ;
And from his nostrils all at once there gushed
A thick jet of man’s blood ; and then and there
He spurned the table from him with a kick,
And spilled the food to earth, and all the bread
And roasted meat were spoiled. Then through the house
The suitors clamoured, as they saw the man
Go down, and from their seats they sprang in panic,
Staring each way along the well-built walls ;
But nowhere was there shield or mighty spear

To seize ; and savagely they cursed Odysseus :

' To thy cost, stranger, dost thou shoot at men !
Never again in any match shalt thou
Take part ; thy doom is on thee, sure and sharp !
Yea, thou hast slain the man who was far best
Of all the youths of Ithaca. Therefore
Shall vultures eat thee here.'

So said each man, because indeed they thought
Odysseus had not killed him wilfully ;
And in their folly failed to understand
That over them, ay, all of them, had been
Made fast the cords of death.

But with a scowl spake deep Odysseus to them :
' You thought, ye dogs, that I would never come
Home from the Trojans' land, in that ye wasted
My house and wantoned with the women slaves
By force ; and though I lived, behind my back
Courtied my wife and had no fear of the gods
Who hold wide heaven, nor the indignation
Of men hereafter. Now the cords of death
Have been made fast o'er one and all of you.'

So said he, and pale fear gat hold of all ;
And each man peered to see how he might 'scape
The plunge to death. Eurymachus alone
Made answer to him :

' If thou indeed art Ithacan Odysseus
Come home again, what thou hast said is right
About the Achæans' doings—many deeds
Of folly both indoors and out of doors.
But there he lies who was to blame for all —
Antinous. 'Twas he that set on foot
These doings, not so much that he desired
Or sought the marriage, as with other plans
Which Cronos' son hath not fulfilled for him ;
That he might lie in wait and slay thy son,

And o'er the land of peopled Ithaca
Himself be king. Now justly lies he slain.
But do thou spare the folk—thy folk : and we
Will get thee recompense throughout the land
Anon, for all that has been drunk and eaten
Within thy halls. Each man shall severally
Bring thee atonement worth a score of oxen,
And pay thee bronze and gold until thy heart
Is soothed. Till then, no wonder thou art angry !'

But scowling fiercely deep Odysseus said :
' Eurymachus, not if ye paid me all
Your heritage, yea, even all you have
And found the means to add thereto, e'en then
I would not hold my hands from the death-work,
Until the suitors should have paid full price
For their transgressions. Now it lies with you
To stand and fight, or fly—if any may
Avoid the fates and death. But there be some
I trow, will not escape the plunge to death.'

So said he, and their knees and hearts were loosed
There where they stood. But yet a second time
Among them spake Eurymachus :

' Friends, for ye see this man will never hold
His conquering hands, but now that he has got
The polished bow and quiver, he will shoot
From the smooth threshold till he kills us all,
Now let us think of fighting ! Draw your swords,
And hold the tables as a shield before you
Against the swift death-arrows ; all together
Have at him now, and see if we can thrust him
Down from the plinth and out ! Then through the city
And give the swift alarm : that done, this man
Should soon have shot his last.'

With that he drew his keen bronze two-edged sword,
And with a horrid cry sprang at Odysseus ;

But that same instant good Odysseus shot
And struck him on the chest beside the nipple,
And sent the swift bolt right into his liver.
So from his hand he dropped his sword to earth,
And sprawling fell bent-up across the table,
Sweeping the food and the two-handled cup
On to the floor. And in his agony
He beat his forehead on the ground, and kicked
The chair with both his feet and rattled it ;
And o'er his eyes fell mist.

Then charging straight ahead Amphinomus
Made at superb Odysseus, and had drawn
His keen sword in the hope to make him yield
Him outlet through the doors. But quicker came
Telemachus, and smote him from behind
Between the shoulders with a bronze-tipped spear,
And drove it through his breast ; and with a crash
He fell and struck the earth full with his forehead.
But, leaving there the long spear fixed in him,
Telemachus sprang back in mighty dread
Lest one of the Achæans, as he tugged
The long spear out, might rush and cut him down,
Or smite him as he stooped above the dead.
So back he ran, and very quickly came
Unto his father, and took post beside him
And spake with wingéd words :

‘ See, father, I will bring thee now a shield
And pair of spears and helmet all of bronze,
Close fitting to the head ; and will come back
And arm myself, and also will give arms
Unto the swineherd and yon neatherd, since
’Tis better to wear mail.’

And deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ Run, fetch them, while I still have arrows left
For my defence, lest as I stand alone,

'They thrust me from the doorway.'

He spake. Telemachus obeyed his father,
And hurried to the armoury where he knew
The glorious arms were laid ; and thence he took
Four shields, eight spears, and brazen helmets four
With plumes of thick horse-hair ; and started back
With them and hastened quickly to his father.
Then first of all he girt upon himself
The bronze ; and in like fashion the two thralls
Did on the handsome arms, and took their stand
Beside Odysseus, wise and crafty-minded.

He meantime, while he still had arrows left
For his defence, kept taking aim and shooting
The suitors one by one within his house ;
And thick and fast they fell. Howbeit when
The arrows failed their master as he shot,
He set the bow to stand beside the door-post
Of the strong hall, against the bright front wall.
A fourfold shield he put about his shoulders,
And on his mighty head a well-made helmet
Whose horse-hair plume waved terribly on high ;
And took a sturdy pair of bronze-tipped spears.

Now in the well-built wall, above the floor,
There was a certain postern, and along
The topmost level of the strong hall's plinth
A way led to the passage, though it was
Closed by a pair of tightly-fitting doors.
Odysseus bade the goodly swineherd stand
Near by and watch this postern, for it had
But one approach. Then Agelaus spake
Among them, and made clear his word to all :

' Friends, is there not a man of us will climb
Up by the postern door and tell the people,
So that the rallying-cry be swiftly raised ?
Then should this fellow soon have shot his last.'

Then said to him Melanthius of the goats :
' Nowise, prince Agelaus, may it be.
Terribly near is the fine courtyard gate,
And perilous the passage mouth. One man,
So were he valiant, might hold up a host.
But see now, let me bring you arms to don
From the store-room ; for there and nowhere else
I think Odysseus and his splendid son
Have piled the arms.'

With that Melanthius the goatherd climbed
Into the inner store-room of Odysseus,
By the clerestory of the hall ; and thence
He took a dozen shields, a dozen spears,
A dozen brazen helmets with thick plumes
Of horse-hair, and came back and brought them quickly
And gave them to the suitors. Then Odysseus
Felt knees and heart give way, when he beheld
The suitors girding on the arms and shaking
The long spears in their hands. He realized
How big his task was ; and with wingéd words
He spake unto Telemachus in haste :

' In truth, Telemachus, one of the women
Indoors is rousing a tough battle for us,
Or else it is Melanthius.'

Then wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Father, 'tis I that am at fault in this.
None other is to blame. For I left open
The tight doors of the store-room ; and their spy
Was but too sharp ! But go thou, good Eumæus,
And close the store-room door, and ascertain
If some one of the women is at work,
Or, as I think, Melanthius, Dolius' son.'

Now they two talked with one another thus.
But once again Melanthius of the goats
Went to the room to fetch the goodly arms,

And the brave swineherd marked him, and he spake
At once unto Odysseus who was near him :

‘ Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, see, there goes again
That pestilential knave, whom we suspected,
Toward the armoury ! Now tell me clearly :
Am I to slay him if I prove the better ?
Or bring him here to thee, that he may pay
The price of all the many sins which he
Hath purposed in thy house ? ’

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ See now, Telemachus and I, we two
Will hold the haughty suitors in the hall,
For all their rage ; but go ye two, and bind
His feet and hands behind his back, and throw him
Into the armoury, and behind his back
Tie boards, and lash a twisted rope to him
And sling him up to the tall pillar, close
Against the rafters, so that he may keep
Alive for a long time and suffer torment.’

Then readily they hearkened and obeyed.
Forth to the armoury they made their way,
Unseen of him within ; he was in fact
Searching for arms further inside the room ;
And they two stood in wait on either side
The door ; and when Melanthius of the goats
Was in the act of stepping o’er the threshold,
Bearing a goodly helmet in one hand,
And in the other hand a broad old shield,
Rust-stained—the shield of prince Laertes, which
He bore when he was young ; but now it was
Laid by, the stitching of the straps all loose—
The pair of watchers sprang on him and seized him
And dragged him by the hair inside, and threw him
Down on the floor all terror-struck, and tied

His hands and feet in grievous bonds, and wound
Them tight behind him, as Laertes' son,
The steadfast good Odysseus, ordered them.
And they made fast to him a twisted rope
And slung him up to the tall pillar, close
Against the rafters. Then, Eumæus swineherd,
Didst thou deride him, saying :

‘ Now in good truth, Melanthius, shalt thou watch
The long night through, laid in an easy bed
As fitteth thee ; nor miss the early Dawn
Gold-throned, as forth she comes from Ocean's streams,
What time it is thy wont to drive thy goats
To make the suitors' meal within the house.’

So he was left there stretched in mortal bonds ;
But they two put their armour on, and closed
The shining door, and went back to Odysseus,
The wise and crafty-minded. There both sides
Stood breathing fury, four men by the threshold,
While those within were many men and good.
Then nigh to them Athene, child of Zeus,
Came, like to Mentor both in form and voice ;
And glad Odysseus was at sight of her,
And thus he spake :

‘ Mentor, keep us from hurt ! Remember me,
Thine old companion, who did oft befriend thee ;
And thou and I are like in age.’

So said he, but he knew it was Athene,
The rouser of the host. But on their part
The suitors shouted in the hall, and first
Spake Agelaus Damastorides,
Rebuking her :

‘ Now, Mentor, do not let him with his talk
Prevail on thee to fight against the suitors
And lend him aid ! For we shall work our will
I say, like this ; when we have killed these men,

Father and son, then will we kill thee too
Along with them, for the mad deeds that thou
Art bent on there. Ay, thou with thine own head
Shalt pay the price. And then, once we have quelled
Thy fury with the sword, we will confound
All thy possessions, in or out of doors,
With what Odysseus owns ; we will not suffer
Thy sons and daughters in thy house to bide,
Nor thy good wife to gad about the town
Of Ithaca.'

So said he ; but Athene grew more wroth
At heart, and chid Odysseus angrily :

' No longer is thy courage firm, Odysseus,
Nor is such valour in thee, as when once
For sake of white-armed Helen, the high-born
Thou foughtest with the Trojans nine long years,
And slewest many men in dreadful strife,
And by thy counsel Priam's wide-wayed city
Was taken. How then, now that thou art come
Home to thine own, confronted with the suitors,
Lamentest thou that thou must play the man ?
Nay, friend, come here and stand by me and see
My deeds, that thou mayst know what sort of man
Is Mentor, son of Alcimus, to repay
Kind actions in the midst of enemies ! '

She spake, but did not give him yet in full
Decisive victory. For a space she wished
To try the might and prowess of Odysseus
And of his splendid son. But she herself
Flew to a roof beam of the smoky hall
And sate there, in the likeness of a swallow.

Now Agelaus Damastorides,
With Demoptolemus and Eurynomus,
Amphimedon and Polyctor's son, Peisander,
And Polybus the wise, urged on the suitors ;

For these were far the best of them in valour
That were still left there fighting for their lives.
By now the rest had fallen 'neath the bow
And rain of shafts. But Agelaus spake
Among them, and made clear his word to all :

'At last this man will hold his conquering hands !
See, friends, how Mentor, after uttering empty boasts
Has gone from him ; and these are left alone
Right in the doorway. Therefore do not all
Cast your long spears at once, but six of you
Throw first, if peradventure Zeus may let us
Smite down Odysseus, and win fame. Once he
Is down, we need not care about the others.'

He spake ; and as he bade, they hurled their spears
With all their might, but Pallas spoiled their casts.
One hit the door-post of the well-built hall ;
One the close-fitting door ; another spear
Of ash-wood, weighed with bronze, stuck in the wall.
So when they all had dodged the suitors' spears,
First spake Odysseus, steadfast goodly man :

' Friends, now I give the word—let us too cast
Into the press of suitors ; for they mean
To slay us, on the top of older wrongs.'

So said he, and they all took steady aim
And cast their pointed spears ; wherewith Odysseus
Snote Demoptolemus ; Telemachus
Slew Euryades ; the swineherd, Elatus ;
The neatherd slew Peisander. So all those
Bit the broad earth. The remnant of the suitors
Fell back to the far end ; but these dashed in
And pulled their spears out of the dead men's bodies.

Once more the suitors hurled their pointed spears
With all their might, but Pallas spoiled their casts.
One hit the door-post of the well-built hall ;
One the close-fitting door ; another spear

Of ash-wood, weighed with bronze, stuck in the wall.
But with a glancing blow upon the wrist
Anphimedon did hit Telemachus ;
The bronze just tore the skin ; Ctesippus grazed
Eumæus' shoulder, seen above the shield,
With his long spear, but it flew past and fell
To earth. And once again those with Odysseus,
The wise and crafty, hurled their pointed spears
Into the press of suitors ; then Odysseus,
Sacker of cities, smote Eurydamas ;
Telemachus, Amphimedon ; the swineherd
Smote Polybus ; and last of all the neatherd
Wounded Ctesippus in the chest, and boasted
Above him, saying :

‘ Ho, mockery-loving son of Polythereses !
Never again give way so far to folly
As to talk big ; but to the gods commit
Thy case, for they are mightier far than thou.
This is my gift to pay thee for the ox-foot
Thou gavest lately to godlike Odysseus
When he was playing beggar through the house.’

So spake the herdsman of the shambling kine.
But in close fight with his long spear Odysseus
Wounded Damastor's son ; Telemachus
Wounded Evenor's son, Leiocritus,
Right in the flank, and drove the bronze spear-point
Clean through ; and prone he fell, and struck the earth
Full with his forehead. Then it was, Athene
Held out her ægis from the roof on high,
That sign of death to men. The suitors' minds
Were panic-stricken ; through the halls they fled,
Like herded kine on whom the flitting gadfly
Falls and stampedes them, in the springtime when
The days grow long. And e'en as from the hills
Swoop vultures with hooked beaks and curving claws,

And fall upon the lesser birds, and these
Skim o'er the lowland shrinking from the clouds,
While on them pounce the vultures and destroy them,
And no defence have they and no escape ;
And men take pleasure in the sport : e'en so
Odysseus and his men assailed the suitors,
And through the hall smote them this way and that ;
And hideous groans arose as heads were smitten,
And all the floor ran blood.

But with a rush Leiodes came and seized
Odysseus by the knees, and begging him
Spoke wingéd words :

' Odysseus, I entreat thee, by thy knees,
Have mercy and show pity on me ! Never
In word or deed, I tell thee, have I wronged
A single woman in thy halls ; what is more,
I tried to check the rest when any of them
Behaved so badly. But they would not listen
Nor keep their hands from naughtiness ; wherefore
Upon themselves by their own wanton folly
They brought a hideous death ; but I who was
Their soothsayer, I who have done no harm,
Shall even fall as they—so true it is,
No gratitude abides for good deeds done.' "

But scowling at him deep Odysseus said :
' If thou avowest thee their soothsayer
Indeed, then many times must thou have prayed
Here in my house, that far removed from me
Might be the issue of my glad return,
And that my wife should go with thee and bear
Thee children ; therefore shalt thou not escape
The bitterness of death.'

With that he seized in his strong hand a sword
That lay where Agelaus as he died
Had let it fall to earth, and with it smote him

Full on the neck, and even as he spoke,
His head rolled in the dust.

Now Terpes' son, the minstrel Phemius,
Who used perforce to sing among the suitors,
Still made an effort to escape black fate.
With his loud lyre in hand he stood beside
The postern door, distracted in his mind :
' Now shall I slip from hall and sit me down
Beside the well-built altar of high Zeus,
The courtyard god, whereon Laertes oft
Had burnt the thighs of oxen, with Odysseus ?
Or shall I run and clasp Odysseus' knees
In supplication ? ' As he thought thereon,
' This seemed the better way, to clasp his knees ;
So on the ground he laid his hollow lyre
Between the mixing-bowl and the high seat
Inlaid with silver, and himself sprang forward
And clasped Odysseus by the knees, and spake
Beseeching him with wingéd words :

' Odysseus, I entreat thee, by thy knees,
Have mercy and show grace to me ! hereafter
' Twill be a grief to thee if thou hast slain
A minstrel, me, who sing to gods and men.
I am self-taught ; the god has breathed in me
Songs of all kinds ; and I am fit to sing
To thee as though thou wert a god. Wherefore
Be not so instant to cut off my head.
Yea, thine own son Telemachus will tell thee
That not of mine own wish or will did I
Frequent thy house to sing unto the suitors
At feast ; but they, because they were so many
And strong, constrained me hither.'

He spake, and the strong prince Telemachus
Heard him, and said at once unto his father,
Who was close by :

‘ Hold back thy sword ; wound not this blameless man.
Yea, let us save Medon the herald also,
Who always had a care of me at home,
When still I was a child ; unless perchance
Philoetius has killed him, or the swineherd,
Or he hath come on thee as thou wert raging
All through the house.’

So said he, and wise-hearted Medon heard him ;
For he lay crouching underneath a seat,
Hid in a new-flayed ox-skin, in the hope
Of ’scaping from black death. He sprang up quickly
From ’neath the seat and threw the ox-hide off,
And rushing forward clasped Telemachus
About the knees, and spoke beseechingly
With wingéd words :

‘ Friend, here I am ; and do thou stay thy hand
And check thy father, lest in his great might
He harm me with the sharp sword, out of wrath
Against the suitors, who within his house
Wasted his goods, and in their foolishness
Held thee of no account.’

But deep Odysseus smiled and said to him :
‘ Be of good cheer ; for lo, my son hath saved
And rescued thee, that thou mayst realize
And tell to others also, how much better
Is doing good than doing ill. But go,
Thou and this minstrel of the many songs,
Forth from the hall and sit ye down outside,
Out of the slaughter, in the court-yard, till
I finish all I needs must do indoors.’

At that the twain went forth, and left the hall,
And sate down both of them by great Zeus’ altar,
Staring all round them, still expecting death.
But through his house Odysseus peered to see
If anyone still lived, and lay in hiding

To shun black death ; but found them one and all
Fallen, a host of them, in blood and dust,
Like fishes which the fishermen have drawn
In their net's mesh out from the hoary sea
Upon the curving beach ; and all the fish,
Sore longing for the salt sea-waves, lie heaped
Upon the sand, and the bright sun comes out
And takes away their life. So even now
One on another lay the suitors heaped.
Then to Telemachus spake deep Odysseus :

‘ Go thou, and call to me nurse Eurycleia,
‘That I may tell her what is in my mind.’

So said he, and Telemachus obeyed
His father. Rattling at the doors he called
Nurse Eurycleia :

‘ Up now, old lady, that hast charge of all
Our women servants in the house ; come here,
My father calls—he wants to speak to thee.’

So said he, but her answer found no wings.
She threw the doors wide of the stately hall
And entered, and Telemachus went first
Before her. ‘Mid the bodies of the slain
She found Odysseus there, with blood and dirt
Smeared, like a lion coming from his meal
Upon a farmstead ox ; his chest and both
His jowls are bloody, and the sight of him
Is fearful ; so besmeared Odysseus was,
Both hands and feet. Now when she saw the dead,
And that great pool of blood, she made as though
To cry for joy ; so great a deed it was
She looked on ; but Odysseus held her back
And checked her in her eagerness, and spake
And said to her with wingéd words :

‘ Rejoice in thine own heart, old dame, but hush!
Cry not aloud ; ’tis an unholy thing

To boast above men slain ! And these men here
The fate of heaven and their own reckless deeds
Have overcome, because they honoured no one
Of men upon the earth, nor bad nor good,
That came among them ; therefore by their folly
Upon themselves they brought a hideous death.
But come, name me the women in the house,
And which of them dishonour me and which
Are innocent.'

Then Eurycleia, the good nurse, replied :
' Yea, I will tell thee all the truth, my child.
Within the house are fifty women servants
Of thine, whom we have trained to do their work,
To card the wool and bear the lot of slaves ;
And of them, twelve in all have gone the way
Of shame, misprizing me and their own mistress,
Penelope. Thy son is but new-grown ;
Nor would his mother let him take command
Of women servants. Come now, let me go
To the bright room upstairs and tell thy wife,
On whom some god hath sent a sleep.'

But deep Odysseus answered her and said :
' Wake her not yet, but call the women hither
Who in the past behaved them shamelessly.'

So said he ; and the old dame left the hall
To tell the women and to bid them come.
Meanwhile Odysseus called to him the three,
Telemachus, the neatherd and the swineherd,
And spake with wingéd words :

' Begin ye now to carry out the dead,
And bid the women help you ; after that
Clean up the tables and the goodly seats
With water and with porous sponges. Then
When ye have set in order all the house,
Lead out the women from the stately hall,

Between the round-house and the sacred fence
About the court, and there with your long swords
Hew them all down until ye take their life,
And they forget the joy they had of old
In secret dalliance, at the suitors' pleasure.'

He spake, and all the women in a crowd
Came wailing wildly, shedding floods of tears ;
And first they bore the bodies of the slain
Outside, and laid them 'neath the portico
Of the fenced court, where one upon another
They propped them up. Odysseus gave the orders
And urged them on himself ; they had no choice
But to bear forth the bodies. After that
They cleansed the tables and the goodly seats
With water and with porous sponges. Then
Telemachus, the neatherd and the swineherd
Took spades and scraped the floor of the strong house ;
And what they scraped the maids bore forth and threw
Outside. Now when they had tidied all the room,
They led the women from the well-built hall
Between the round-house and the sacred fence
About the court, and penned them in a strait
Whence there was no escape. Then to the others
First spake the wise Telemachus :

' Now never by a clean death let me take
These women's lives, who on my head have poured
Disgrace, and on my mother, and were used
To lie beside the suitors.'

Upon the word he tied to a great column
The cable of a blue-prowed ship, and slung it
About the round-house, stretching it high up
So that the feet of none might touch the ground.
And, as when thrushes with long wings, or doves
Dash right into a snare set in a thicket,
When they are making for their rest, and 'tis

A cruel bed that takes them, so the women
Held in a row their heads, and round the necks
Of all were nooses cast, that they might die
A death most piteous. With their feet they writhed
A little while—not long.

Then out they led Melanthius through the doorway
And court, and shore off with the savage sword
His ears and nostrils, and tore out his guts
For dogs to feed on raw, and in their fury
They hacked his hands and feet off.

When that was done, they washed their hands and feet
And joined Odysseus in the house. So all
The work was finished. But Odysseus called
To Eurycleia, the good nurse :

‘ Old wife, bring sulphur, cleanser of pollution,
And bring me fire, that I may purify
The hall. And do thou bid Penelope
Come with her handmaids here, and summon all
The women in the house.’

Then answered Eurycleia, the good nurse :
‘ Yea, all this thou hast said aright, my child.
But let me bring thee clothes, a cloak and tunic,
And stand not in the halls with thy broad shoulders
Thus wrapped in rags ; that were a cause of blame.’

But deep Odysseus answered her and said :
‘ First let a fire be made me now in hall.’

So said he ; Eurycleia, the good nurse,
Obeyed, and brought him fire and sulphur ; so
Thoroughly he purged the hall and house and court.

But through the fine house of Odysseus went
The old dame back to tell the maids the news
And bid them come. With torches in their hands
Forth from their room they came. They thronged around
And hugged Odysseus, and they held his head
And neck and hands, and kissed them lovingly ;

But on him came a sweet desire to weep
And wail, for in his heart he knew them all.

BOOK XXIII

Then to the upper room the old dame climbed,
Cackling aloud, to bring her mistress news
That her dear lord was in the house. Her knees
Went nimbly, but her feet were all a-stumble ;
And by her mistress' head she stood and spake :

‘ Wake up, Penelope, dear child—to see
With thine own eyes what thou dost hope for daily !
Here is Odysseus ; yea, he hath come home,
Late though his coming is ; and he hath slain
The haughty suitors who have vexed his house,
Devoured his substance, and oppressed his son.’

Then wise Penelope replied to her :
‘ Nanny, the gods have made thee mad, the gods
Who can make foolish e'en the very wise,
And set the simple-minded on the path
Of understanding. They have marred thy wits,
Though thou wert shrewd before. With this wild tale
Why dost thou mock me who am full of grief,
And wake me from the sweet sleep that had bound me
And closed mine eyelids ? Never have I slept
So soundly, since Odysseus went to see
That evil Ilíos, never to be named !
No, get thee down, back to the women's room.
If any other of those maids of mine
Had come and told me this, and waked me up,
I should have sent her very quickly back
In sorry fashion to her room ; howbeit
Herein old age shall stand thee in good stead.’

But Eurycleia, the dear nurse replied :
‘ I mock thee not, my child ; in very truth

Here is Odysseus ; yea, he hath come home
Just as I tell thee. He is that same stranger
Whom all of them dishonoured in the halls.
And long ago Telemachus was 'ware
Of him within the house, but prudently
Concealed his father's purpose, that he might
Requite the outrage of o'erweening men.'

So said she. Then Penelope was glad,
And springing from her bed, she threw her arms
Round the old dame, and let a tear-drop fall,
And spake, and said to her with wingéd words :

' Now, Nanny dear, I pray thee, tell me true.
If he indeed has come home, as thou sayst,
How laid he hands upon the shameless suitors,
For he was only one, while they remained
Always in numbers in the house ? '

Then Eurycleia the dear nurse replied :
' I neither saw nor asked ; only I heard
The groaning of men slain. We women sate
In the far portion of our well-built room
Bewildered, cut off by close-fitting doors,
Until at last thy son Telemachus,
Sent by his sire to call me, bade me forth ;
And then I found Odysseus standing up
Among the bodies of the slain, all round him
On the hard floor, one lying on another.
It would have comforted thy heart to see him,
Stained like a lion with the blood and dirt.
But now the dead men are all heaped together
At the yard-gates, while he is purifying
The goodly house with sulphur, and has kindled
A mighty fire. Lo, he hath sent me forth
To call thee. Come with me, that both of you
May enter into joy of heart, for both
Have suffered many pains. But now at last

Hath been accomplished this thy long desire.
For he himself has come to his own hearth
Alive, and found thee and his son at home ;
And for the suitors—them who wrought him evil—
He hath repaid them all in his own house.'

Then wise Penelope replied to her :
' Dear Nanny, do not boast and laugh o'er them ;
Not yet ! Thou know'st how glad would be the sight
Of him at home to all, but most to me
And to my son, born to us twain. But this
Is no true tale, as thou dost tell it. No,
'Tis one of the immortals in his wrath
At their heart-breaking insolence and trespass,
Hath slain the lordly suitors. They respected
No man of men on earth, nor bad nor good,
Whoever came to them. 'Tis through their folly
That they have suffered evil. But Odysseus
Has lost far off his chance of coming home
Unto Achæa, and himself is lost.'

Then Eurycleia the dear nurse replied :
' What word is this, my child, that has escaped
The barrier of thy teeth ? Thou saidst that he,
Thy husband, who is even now within
By his own hearth, will never more return !
Thy mind was ever sceptical. Come now,
I will declare to thee another token,
Most manifest, to wit the scar of the wound
Which the boar gave him once with his white tusk.
I recognized it as I washed his feet
And wished to tell thee, but he laid his hand
Upon my mouth, and out of his wise purpose
Suffered me not to speak. So come with me,
And I will stake my life, that if I play
Thee false, thou slay me by the vilest death.'

Then wise Penelope replied to her :

‘Nanny, ’tis hard for thee, however wise,
To mark the arts of everlasting gods.
Yet let us go unto my son, that I
May see the suitors dead, and him that slew them.’

With that she came down from her upper room,
Debating much—now should she stand aloof
And question her dear husband, or go nigh him
And clasp and kiss his head and hands? But when
She had come in and crossed the threshold stone,
There in the firelight by the further wall
She sate and faced Odysseus. He was sitting
By a tall pillar, looking on the ground,
Waiting to see whether his noble wife
Would speak to him when once her eyes beheld him.
But long she sate in silence, and amazement
Came on her soul; one moment she would gaze
Full in the face at him; and now again
She knew him not, so meanly clad he was.
Then did Telemachus reproach her, saying:

‘Mother o’ mine, ill mother, hard of heart,
Why dost thou thus turn from my father? Why
Dost thou not sit by him and question him
And ask him all? I wot, no other woman
Would steel her heart thus to hold off her lord,
Who after much sore toil had come to her
And his own country in the twentieth year!
But stiffer always is thy heart than stone.’

Then wise Penelope replied to him:
‘My child, my heart within me is amazed;
I have no strength to speak, nor ask a question,
Nor look him in the face. If in good truth
This is Odysseus—if he has come home—
Then shall we know each other, all the better
That we have signs that but we twain can know—
Signs hidden from all others.’

So said she, and the steadfast good Odysseus
Smiled, and spake quickly to Telemachus
With wingéd words :

‘ Telemachus, suffer thy mother now
To test me in the house ; she will soon come
To better knowledge. She disdains me now
Because I am unwashed and vilely clad,
And will not yet admit that I am he.
But let us bethink us what is best to do.
For whoso slays but one man in a land,
And him a man who hath not at his back
Many avengers, why, he flees and leaves
His kinsmen and his home ; but we have slain
The bulwark of the city, those who were
The very flower of youth in Ithaca.
I bid thee think on this.’

To him then wise Telemachus replied :
‘ Nay, father, but look thou to this : they say
Thy counsel is the best in all the world,
And no man living might contend with thee.
But we will follow thee devotedly
Nor fail, I think, in prowess, in so far
As we have strength.’

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ Then will I tell thee how seems best to me.
Bathe first, and put your tunics on, and bid
The handmaids in the quarters take their raiment,
And let the holy bard, with his loud lyre
In hand, lead off for us a merry dance ;
That whoso hears the sound from out of doors
Be he a passer-by or be he neighbour,
May say it is a wedding feast ; and thus
No rumour of the slaughter of the suitors
Shall fly about the town, till we have gone
Forth to our wooded farm, where we anon

Will take such counsel as the Olympian
May lend us to our profit.'

Quickly they hearkened and obeyed his words.
First then they bathed and put their tunics on ;
The women robed ; the holy minstrel took
His polished lyre, and stirred in them a wish
For cheery dancing and sweet singing. So
The great hall rang all round them with the tread
(Of dancing men and of fair-girdled women.
And thus would someone say who heard the sound
From out of doors :

'Ay, ay ! someone hath wed the much-wooed queen.
Hard-hearted was she, and could not endure
To keep the great house of her wedded husband
Right to the end, till he should come.'

So would they say, but knew not how things were.
Meanwhile Eurynome the housewife bathed
Great-heart Odysseus in his house, and rubbed him
With oil, and clad him in fair cloak and tunic.
Then on his head Athene shed much grace,
And made him taller and more strong to see,
And loosed his locks like curly hyacinths.
And as a cunning smith, trained in all craft
By Pallas and Hephæstus, over-plates
Gold upon silver, and his work hath grace,
So o'er Odysseus' head and shoulders now
The goddess shed a glow ; and from his bath
He came, in form like unto the immortals.
Then down he sate again on the high seat
Whence he had risen, opposite his wife,
And spake and said to her :

'Strange lady ! sure, beyond all womankind
Have the Olympian dwellers given thee
A heart unsoftened. Why, no other woman
Would steel her heart thus to hold off her lord,

Who after such sore toil had come to her
And his own country in the twentieth year !
But come now, Nanny, strew a bed for me
To lie alone, for, sooth, the heart within her
Is made of iron.'

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
' Strange sir, it is not that I am proud-minded,
Nor scorn thee, nor am wildered in amazement ;
But I do know right well what thou wert like,
When on thy long-oared ship thou wentest forth
From Ithaca. But, Eurycleia, go
And strew for him the sturdy bed, outside
The strong bride chamber that he built himself ;
And, having brought the sturdy bed out there,
Then cast the bedding on it—fleeces, cloaks
And gaudy rugs.'

So said she, and made trial of her lord
But in a burst of anger spake Odysseus
To his true wife : ' A bitter word is this,
That thou hast spoken, lady ! who hath moved
My bed elsewhere ? that were it hard to do,
E'en for a man of skill, unless some god
In person came, and lightly at his will
Set it elsewhere. But there is no man living,
However young and strong, who could upheave it
With ease, because in fashioning the bed
Was wrought a mighty token. And 'twas I
Made it and no one else. Within the court
There grew a pollard olive, long of leaf,
In its full strength ; its girth was like a pillar's ;
Round this I built my room with close-set stones,
Until I finished it, and roofed it over,
And added panelled doors that fitted well.
Then I cut off the long-leaved olive's boughs
And trimmed the trunk up from the root, and smoothed it

Well and expertly with the adze, and made it
Lie straight unto the line, and with an augur
Bored it all out and fashioned the bed-post.
Beginning thence I carved the bedstead out,
Till it was finished, ornamenting it
With ivory and gold and silver. Then
I laced it with bright scarlet thongs of hide.
So now do I declare to thee my token,
But know not, lady, if the bed is still
In place, or whether now some man has severed
The olive stump, and moved the bed elsewhere.'

E'en as he spake, her knees and heart were loosed
To know the certain signs Odysseus told her ;
And bursting into tears she ran straight to him,
And threw her arms about Odysseus' neck,
And kissed his head, and spake :

'Do not be wroth with me, Odysseus ! Since
Wisest of men thou wert in all things else.
It is the gods that gave us pain, the gods
Who grudged us our abiding with each other,
Enjoying youth and drawing nigh old age.
But do not now be vexed with me for this,
Nor blame me, that I could not greet thee thus
At the first sight of thee ! For all the time
The heart within my breast was shivering, lest
Some man should come and cheat me with his tale.
Many there be who plan their wicked profit.
Nay, even Argive Helen, born of Zeus
Would not have lain in love beside a stranger,
Had she imagined that the warlike sons
Of the Achæans were to bring her back
To her own native land. And yet it was
A god that prompted her to do a thing
So shameful, nor till then had she conceived
The notion of such folly—bitter folly

That was the source of sorrow for us too !
But now that thou hast told me the sure tokens
Touching our bed, that never man hath seen,
Save only thou and I and one hand-maid,
Daughter of Actor, whom my father gave me
Ere I came hither, she who keeps the doors
Of our strong bridal chamber ; lo, thou hast
Convinced^d my heart, unbending as it is.'

Her words awoke in him a stronger passion
Of sorrow, and he wept as he embraced
His loved and faithful wife. And even as
The sight of land is welcome unto swimmers,
Whose sturdy ship, hard driven by the blast
And swollen waves, Poseidon smites at sea ;
And but a few have 'scaped the grey sea-water
By swimming for the shore, and with the brine
Their bodies are all crusted ; very glad
Are they to tread upon the land and 'scape
Their evil plight : so welcome was her husband
To her beholding him ; nor would she quite
Unloose her white arms from his neck. And now
Upon their grief might rosy-fingered Dawn
Have risen, had not Athene, keen-eyed goddess,
'Thought otherwise. She held long Night delayed
In the far West, and on the other verge
By Ocean-stream she checked the gold-throned Dawn,
And would not let her yoke her swift-foot steeds
That bring men light, Lampus and Phaethon,
The colts that lead the morning.

At last spake deep Odysseus to his wife :
' Dear, for we are not yet come to the end
Of all our trials ; there is yet to be
Toil without measure, burdensome and long,
Which I must needs accomplish to the end.
So prophesied Teiresias' ghost to me,

The day when I went down to Hades' house
To ask how we, my comrades and myself,
Might win back home. But come, wife, now to bed,
That we may take our joy of rest at once,
Lulled by sweet sleep.'

Then wise Penelope replied to him :
'As for thy bed, of course it shall be ready
Whene'er thou wishest, since in truth the gods
Have caused thee to come back to thy good house
And thine own land. But now that thou hast thought
Thereof—some god has put it in thy heart—
Come, tell me of this trial, for, I think,
Hereafter I must hear of it ; and 'tis
No worse to know it now.'

Then deep Odysseus answered her and said :
'Ah wife, why dost thou press me now so hard
To speak ? Howbeit I will tell thee all,
And hide no thing. Thy heart will not rejoice ;
Indeed I have no joy in it myself.
Teiresias bade me fare to many towns
Of men, and take in hand a shapen oar
Till I should meet with men who do not know
The sea, nor eat of food savoured with salt ;
And naught they know of ships with scarlet cheeks,
Nor shapen oars, that are as wings to ships.
Yea, and he told me this most obvious sign ;
I will not hide it from thee. Whensoever
Another wayfarer meeting me shall say
I have a winnowing fan on my stout shoulder,
Then, then he bade me plant my oar in earth,
And make fair sacrifice to king Poseidon—
A ram, and bull, and boar that mates with sows—
And set out home and to the deathless gods
Who hold wide heaven, even to each in turn,
Offer my hallowed hecatombs. But death

Shall come to me far off the sea, a death
Of all most gentle, which shall slay me when
I am fordone with sleek old age, anid
My prosperous folk. All this, said he, should be.'

Then wise Penelope made him reply :
' Why, if indeed the gods are giving thee
A happier old age, then there is hope
That yet thou mayst find some escape from evil.'

So they two with each other held converse.
Meanwhile Eurynome, she and the nurse,
Made the bed ready with soft coverlets
By the light of burning torches. And when they
With busy haste had strewed the well-made bed,
Back to her room went the old dame to rest,
While with a torch in hand before them walked
Eurynome the chamber-maid, as they
Went to their bed ; she brought them to the room,
And then went back. So with great joy they came
Unto the usage of their ancient bed.
Meanwhile Telemachus and the two herdsmen
Ceased from the dance, and made the women cease ;
And 'neath the shadowy halls themselves lay down.

Now when they twain had had their fill of love,
They found it a great joy to tell their stories,
Each unto each. That wondrous lady told
Of all she had endured at home, to see
The ruinous company of suitors slaying
So many beasts, cattle and goodly sheep,
In their pursuit of her, while from the jars
Was drawn such store of wine. Zeus-born Odysseus
Recounted all the griefs he had brought on men,
And all the toil and sorrow he had borne,
While she was glad to listen, nor did sleep
Fall on her eyelids, till his tale was done.

Now he began by telling her how first

He overcame the Cicones, and then
Came to the Lotus-eaters' wealthy land,
And all the Cyclops' doings, and how he
Requited him for those stout comrades, whom
He ate without remorse. Then how he came
To Æolus, who warmly welcomed him
And sent him on his way ; but 'twas not yet
His fate to reach his native land, for, lo,
The tempest caught him up again and bore him,
Making loud moan, across the fishy deep.
Then how he came unto Telepylus
The Læstrygonian, and how that people
Destroyed his ships and all his mailed companions,
While he alone escaped in his black ship.
Then spake he of the wiles and craft of Circe,
And how he journeyed in his well-oared galley
To the dank house of Hades, to consult
The spirit of Teiresias the Theban,
And there saw all his comrades, and his mother
Who bore and nurtured him when he was little.
Then how he heard the Sirens' throbbing song,
And reached the Wandering Rocks, and grim Charybdis
And Scylla, from whom men have never yet
Escaped untouched ; then how his comrades slew
The kine of Helios ; how thundering Zeus
Smote his swift galley with a lurid bolt,
And his good comrades perished all together,
While he alone escaped the evil fates ;
How to the isle Ogygia he came
And to the nymph Calypso, and she kept him
In her deep caves, desiring him for mate,
And tended him, and said that she would make him
Immortal and unageing all his days,
Yet never won the heart within his breast ;
How with great toil he came to the Phæacians,

And heartily they honoured him, as though
He were a god, and sent him with a ship
To his dear native land, with gifts of bronze
And gold and plenteous raiment. And so ended
His story, when sweet sleep that loosens limbs
Leapt on him quickly, loosening his cares.

Once more the goddess, the keen-eyed Athene,
Had a new purpose. When she judged Odysseus
Had had his heart's content of love and sleep,
Anon she roused the gold-throned Dawn from Ocean
To carry light to men ; and then Odysseus
Sprang up from his soft bed, and to his wife
This charge he gave :

‘ My dear, we both have had our fill of troubles
Already, thou in lamentation here
O'er my distressful coming-home, and I
While Zeus and all the other gods, despite
My yearning to return, bound me in pains
Far from my native land. But now that we
Have both attained the bed of our desire,
Do thou take thought about my wealth indoors :
As for my flocks, which the o'erweening suitors
Have slain, I will myself raid many more,
And others shall the Achæans pay me back,
Till they fill all my folds. But now, behold,
I go to my well-wooded farm, to see
My noble father, who because of me
Is sore distressed ; but upon thee, my wife,
Wise as I know thou art, I lay this charge.
At sunrise will the news at once go forth
About the suitors, whom I slew in hall.
Go then upstairs, thou and thy serving-maids,
And there abide, and look thou on no man,
Nor question any.’

With that he girt his goodly panoply

Upon his back, and roused Telemachus,
The neatherd and the swineherd, and he bade them
All take in hand their implements of war.
Nor were they slack, but clad themselves in mail,
And opening the doors came forth. Odysseus
Went first. By now 'twas light over the earth ;
Howbeit Athene shrouded them in night,
And from the city swiftly led them forth.

BOOK XXIV

Meanwhile Cyllenian Hermes summoned forth
The spirits of the suitors. In his hand
He held his fine gold wand, wherewith he lulls
The eyes of whom he will, and wakens others
Even from sleep again : therewith he roused
And led the ghosts, who followed gibbering.
And as when in some wondrous cave's recess
Flutter the squeaking bats, when one of them
Has dropped down from the rock, out of the cluster
In which they hang together, so the ghosts
Went with him gibbering. Down the mouldy ways
Hermes the Helper led them. Past the streams
Of Ocean, past the Shining Rock they went,
Past the Sun's gateways, and the land of dreams,
And soon they reached the mead of asphodel,
Where bide the ghosts, phantoms of men outworn.

There then they found the spirit of Achilles
Pelides, and the spirits of Patroclus,
And of unstained Antilochus, and Aias,
Who was in face and form the goodliest
Of all the Greeks, save Peleus' peerless son.

While these were thronging round Achilles, came
The ghost of Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
In sorrow to them ; and around him gathered
The other ghosts of those who died with him
And met their portion in Ægisthus' house.
And first the ghost of Peleus' son addressed him :

'Atrides, over all the other heroes
We thought that ever thou wert dear to Zeus,
Whose joy is in the thunder, since thou wert

Lord of so many men of might in Troy-land,
Where we Achæans suffered woes. But lo,
It seems that deadly doom—the doom that no one
Avoids of all men born—was quick to come
Even on thee ! O, would that in the pride
Of thy dominion and renown, thou hadst
Come on thy death and fate among the Trojans !
For then would all the host of the Achæans
Have built thy tomb, and for thy son wouldst thou
Have won much after fame ; but now, behold,
It was decreed that thou shouldst be cut off
By a most piteous death.'

To him the spirit of Atrides spake :
'Ah, happy man, godlike Achilles, son
Of Peleus, that wert slain far off from Argos
In Troy-land, while around thee others too,
The bravest sons of Troy and of Achæa,
Fell fighting for thy corpse ; but thou wert lying
In the dust-whirl, so great and greatly fallen,
Forgetful of thy feats of horsemanship !
And all day long we fought, nor would we ever
Have paused from fighting, but Zeus sent a storm
And made us pause. But after we had borne thee
Out of the battle to the ships, we laid thee
Upon a bier, and washed thy fair skin clean
With unguents and warm water. The Danaï
Shed many a hot tear at thy side, and shore
Their hair. And from the sea thy mother came
With her immortal sea-maids, when she heard
The tidings, and there rose a wondrous cry
Across the deep ; and trembling fell on all
The Achæans ; up they sprang and would have rushed
Back to the hollow ships, had not a man
Wise in the ancient wisdom held them back,
Nestor, whose counsel was before proved best.

With good intent, he spake and said to them :

“ Hold, Argives ! flee ye not, Achæan youth !
Lo, 'tis his mother from the sea comes forth
With her immortal maidens of the sea,
To look upon the face of her dead son.”

‘ So said he, and the Achæans high of heart
Ceased from their panic ; and about thee stood
The daughters of the old man of the sea
Piteously wailing ; and they clothed thee round
With raiment incorruptible. In sequence
All the Nine Muses with sweet voices led
The funeral wail ; not one dry eye wouldst thou
Have seen among the Argives ; the clear chant
Shot up so keenly. So for seventeen days
By day and night as well we mourned for thee,
Immortal gods and mortal men alike ;
And on the eighteenth gave thee to the fire,
And round thee slew many well-fatted sheep
And shambling kine. In garments of the gods
With many unguents and sweet honey thou
Wast burned ; and in their mail moved round the pyre
Many Achæan heroes, horse and foot,
And a great noise went up. And when the flame
Of the fire-god had made an end of thee,
At dawn we gathered thy white bones, Achilles,
And laid them up in unguents and pure wine.
A golden two-eared urn thy mother brought,
Which was, said she, the gift of Dionysus
And famed Hephæstus’ handiwork. Therein
Lie thy white bones, most glorious Achilles,
And mixed with them those of Menœtius’ son,
The dead Patroclus, but apart are laid
Those of Antilochus, whom over all
Thine other comrades, after dead Patroclus,
Thou honouredst. Then o’er the bones we heaped,

We that strong host of Argive warriors,
A great and goodly tomb upon a cliff
Which juts out over the broad Hellespont,
To catch the eyes of men far out at sea,
Both those who are and who shall be hereafter.
'Then from the gods thy mother begged rich prizes,
And set them for the chiefs of the Achæans
To strive for in the midst. Thou in thy day
Hast seen the funeral games of many heroes,
When young men gird themselves and make them ready
To struggle for the prize, at some king's death ;
But at that sight thou wouldst have marvelled most ;
Such glorious prizes did the goddess offer,
'Thetis the silver-footed, in thy honour,
For very dear thou wert unto the gods.
Not e'en in death then hast thou lost thy name,
But among all men shall thy fame be fair
Always, Achilles ! But for me what boots it
That I had wound up all the skein of war ?
For at my coming home Zeus planned for me
An evil ending at Ægisthus' hands,
And at the hands of my accursed wife.'

So they two with each other held converse.
But near them came the herald Argus-slayer
Conducting down the spirits of the suitors
Slain by Odysseus ; and at sight of these
The twain were startled and went straight towards them.
'The ghost of Agamemnon, son of Atreus,
Knew the renowned Amphimedon, the son
Of Melaneüs who had been his host
In his own home in Ithaca. So first
To him the spirit of Atrides spake :

'What hath befallen you, Amphimedon,
That ye have come to the dark underworld,
All picked men of like age ? Why, 'tis as though

One were to pick the best men in a city !
Was it Poseidon smote you in your ships
And roused the stubborn winds and the long waves ?
Or haply foes hurt you on shore, as ye
Were rounding up their cattle and fair flocks,
Or while they fought to save their town and women ?
Answer my question, for I claim to be
Friend to thy house. Rememberest thou not
When I with godlike Menelaus came
There to thy home, to urge Odysseus on
To go on the decked ships with us to Troy ?
It took us a full month to traverse all
That width of sea ; so hardly to our cause
Could we persuade Odysseus, city-sacker.'

The spirit of Amphimedon replied :
' O glorious Agamemnon, king of men,
Atrides, nursed of Zeus, yes, I remember
All these things as thou tellest ; and I will
For my part, tell thee well and truly all
About our evil end, how it was wrought.
Odysseus had been gone long since, and we
Courtied his wife ; and she did not refuse
The hated bridal, nor would make an end,
Because she planned death and black fate for us ;
Moreover she thought out this further trick ;
She set up in her halls a mighty web
And fell a-weaving ; fine it was of thread
And very wide ; and then she said to us :
' " My princely suitors, now that good Odysseus
Is dead, though ye would speed my marriage on,
Have patience yet till I complete this robe ;
I would not that my spinning should be wasted.
'Tis prince Laertes' shroud, against the day
When the fell doom of death that lays men low
Shall strike him down ; that of Achæan women

Throughout the land none may account it blame
In me that he should sleep without a shroud,
Who in his life had gotten great possessions.”

‘ So said she, and our lordly souls assented.
So then by day she wove at the great web,
And in the night she bade them set beside her
The torches, and unpicked it. So by craft
She fooled the Achæans, and eluded them
A three years’ space ; but when the fourth year came,
As round the seasons rolled, and waned the months,
And the full tale of days was brought to pass,
At last one of her women who knew all
Told us, and her we caught unravelling
The splendid web. So sore against her will
Perforce she finished it.

‘ Now after she had woven the great web
And washed it, and produced to us the robe,
(’Twas like the sun or moon) that very hour
Some evil power brought back, I know not whence,
Odysseus to the outskirts of the farm
Where dwelt the swineherd. Thither also came
Divine Odysseus’ son from sandy Pylos
In his black ship ; and they twain, having planned
To slay the suitors foully, made their way
Unto the well-known town ; nay, but Odysseus
Came later, while Telemachus went first.
The swineherd brought Odysseus, vilely clad
Like some old sorry beggar, with a crutch.
Disgusting were the clothes upon his body.
Not one of us—not e’en the elder men—
Could know him for the man he was, when he
Appeared so suddenly ; and we assailed him
With evil words and missiles. Yet awhile
He steeled his heart—there in his very halls—
Against the taunts and throwings ; but at last

When Zeus the ægis-bearer's purpose moved him,
Then, aided by Telemachus, he took
The goodly arms, and laid them all away
In the strong room and drew the bolts. And next
In his great craft he bade his wife produce
The bow and the grey iron for the suitors,
A contest, and the overture of death
For us ill-fated men. Not one of us
Was strong enough to string that mighty bow.
No, we could not come near to it. But when
The great bow came into Odysseus' hands,
Then we all shouted "Do not give it him
For all his talking!" but Telemachus
Alone encouraged him and bade him take it.
So then Odysseus, steadfast goodly man,
Took in his hands the bow, and strung it lightly
And sent an arrow through the iron. Then
He went and took his stand upon the threshold
And poured forth the swift arrows. Terribly
He glared around. He smote Antinous
The prince, and then upon the rest he loosed
With steady aim his arrows winged with woe;
And thick and fast they fell. Then was it known
That some god was their champion, for straightway
They charged us in their fury through the house
And slew us right and left, and on our part
A hideous moaning rose, as heads were smitten
And all the floor ran blood. So, Agamemnon,
We perished, and e'en yet our bodies lie
Uncared-for in Odysseus' halls; for still
Our friends in each man's home know naught of it,
Who might wash off the black blood from our wounds
And lay us out with wailing, for that is
The due meed of the dead.'

The spirit of Atrides answered him :

' O fortunate art thou, Laertes' son,
Subtle Odysseus, in that thou hast gained
So excellent a wife ! Such wisdom had
Unstained Penelope, Icarius' daughter,
That loyally she kept in mind Odysseus,
Her wedded husband. So shall never perish
The story of her virtue ; but the immortals
Shall make for men on earth a gracious song
In honour of Penelope's great faith.
How unlike her Tyndareus' daughter was !
Who plotted evil deeds and did to death
Her wedded lord ; and hateful among men
Shall be the song of her ; and ill repute
She bringeth on the tribe of womankind,
Ay, e'en upon a woman who does right.'

So they two with each other held converse,
Standing in Hades' house, deep under ground.

Now when Odysseus and his friends had gone
Down from the town, they reached in no long time
The fine well-ordered farmstead of Laertes,
Which he had gotten for himself of old
After much toil for it. There was his house,
And all about it ran the row of huts
In which the bondmen thralls who did his pleasure
Ate, sate and slept. And in the house there lived
An old Sicilian woman, who attended
The old man diligently at the farm,
Far from the city. Then Odysseus spake
Unto his servants and his son, and said :

' Now get you gone into the well-built house,
And quickly slay the finest of the pigs
To make a meal. But I will test my father
And see if he will know and recognise me
At sight, or whether he will know me not,
After my absence for so long a time.'

With that he gave the thralls his battle-gear.
Then quickly to the house they went, while he
Drew near the fruitful vineyard on his quest.
He found not Dolius there, as he went down
Through the big plot, nor any of his sons
Or slaves. It chanced that they had gone to gather
Stones for the vineyard wall, and the old man
Was at their head. And so he found his father
Alone, in the well-ordered vineyard, digging
About a plant, clad in a filthy coat
Patched and unseemly ; and around his shins
Were laced a pair of mended ox-hide leggings
To save him from the scratches ; and he wore
Gloves on his hands by reason of the thorns,
And on his head he had a goat-skin cap ;
And so he nursed his grief. But when Odysseus,
That sore-tried goodly man, saw him with age
So worn, and in such grief of heart, he stood
Beneath a pear-tree tall and shed a tear.
Then he took counsel in his heart and mind
Whether to kiss and fall upon his father,
And tell him all, how he had come again
Back to his native land, or whether first
To question him and prove him point by point.
And as he thought, this seemed the better way,
First to essay him with sarcastic words.
With this intent the good Odysseus went
Straight up to him. Now he with head bent down
Kept digging round the plant ; and at his side
His glorious son stood by, and said to him :

‘ Old man, thou hast no lack of skill to tend
A garden ! no, thou carest for it well,
And there is naught at all, nor plant nor fig,
Vine, nor yet olive, pear nor garden-bed
Neglected in this orchard. But I have

Another thing to tell thee—lay not up
Wrath in thy heart thereat ! Thou art thyself
Not well looked after ; sorrowful old age
Is on thee ; thou art piteously unkempt
And meanly clad. Yet 'tis not for thy sloth
Thy lord neglects thee : nothing of the slave
Shows in thy looks and form ; for thou art like
A kingly man, a man who should lie soft,
When he has bathed and eaten, e'en as is
The habit of old men. Come, tell me this
And say it plainly. What man's thrall art thou ?
Whose orchard dost thou tend ? and one thing more
'Tell me, and true, that I may know, if this
Indeed is Ithaca that I have reached,
As some man yonder told me, whom I met
As I was coming hither. He was not
Too quick of wit, for he disdained to tell me
All that I wanted, or indeed to listen
When I enquired about a friend of mine,
If he is living yet, or dead already
And in the house of Hades. I will tell thee,
And do thou mark and listen to me. Once
I entertained a man in mine own land
Who came unto my house, and never yet
Came any mortal man of distant strangers
More welcome there. He claimed to be by birth
From Ithaca, and said his father was
Arceisius' son, Laertes. To my house
I took him, and I entertained him well
In loving-kindness with the ample store
I had, and gave him presents such as are
The due of guests. I gave him seven talents
Of fine-wrought gold, a bowl of solid silver
Of flowered work, a dozen single cloaks,
A dozen coverlets, as many tunics

And goodly mantles too ; and over these
I gave him women, skilled in goodly crafts,
Four comely women whom he picked himself.'

Then shedding tears his father answered him :

'Ay, stranger, truly thou hast reached the land
Whereof thou askest, but 'tis in the hands
Of wanton, reckless men. And all in vain
The gifts, the countless gifts, thou gavest were.
For hadst thou found him living in the land
Of Ithaca, he would have sent thee on
With goodly presents in return for thine
And kind refreshment, as is due to him
Who showeth kindness first. But tell me this,
And say it plain. How many years have sped
Since thou didst entertain that hapless guest,
My son—if ever such a one there was—
My luckless son ? whom far away from friends
And his own land, it may be, on the deep
Fishes have eaten, or he hath become
The prey of birds and beasts upon the shore.
Nor could his mother and his father wrap him
For burial nor lament him, we who bred him ;
Nor true Penelope, his much-wooed wife,
Bewail her lord upon the bier, as meet,
When she had closed his eyes, as is the due
Of those who die. But tell me truly this,
That I may surely know. What man art thou
And whence ? where are thy city and thy parents ?
Where lies the speedy ship which brought thee here,
Thee and thy godlike crew ? or didst thou come
A passenger upon another's ship,
And they departed, having landed thee ?'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said

'Yea, now most plainly will I tell thee all.
From Alybas I come, and there my house

Is widely known. I am Apheidas' son,
And he was son of Polypemon prince ;
As for my name, it is Eperitus ;
But some god drave me hither wandering
From Sicily against my will, and yonder
Off the farm-land, some distance from the city,
My ship is moored. But as concerns Odysseus,
'This is the fifth year since he went away
And left my country, luckless man ! and yet
He had good birds of omen as he went,
Birds on the right-hand side, which made me glad
'To send him off, and made him glad to go ;
And in our hearts both of us hoped to meet
One day in friendship, and exchange brave gifts.'

He spake, and a dark cloud of sorrow fell
On the old man. With both his hands he took
And poured the sooty dust o'er his grey head,
With moans unceasing. Then Odysseus' heart
Was moved, and up his nostrils shot a thrill
(Of anguish as he looked upon his father.
Towards him he sprang, and clasped him in his arms
And kissed him, and he said :

'Nay, father, here am I myself, the man
(Of whom thou askest, in the twentieth year
Come home again ! But stay thy lamentations
And tears and moans. For I will tell thee all,
Though we must make great haste. I have destroyed
'The suitors in our house, and have avenged
'Their bitter insolence and wicked deeds.'

Thereat Laertes answered him and said :
'If thou art verily my son Odysseus,
Come home again, now tell me of some sign
Infallible, so that I may be sure.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
'Look first on this scar and consider it,

Where the boar ripped me with his gleaming tusk,
Upon Parnassus, whither I had gone.
'Thou and my honoured mother, ye had sent me
Unto Autolycus, my mother's father,
To get the gifts which on his coming hither
He promised and agreed to give me. But
Come, I will tell thee also of the trees
Through all this ordered garden, which of old
Thou gavest me when I was but a child
Begging for this and that, and following thee
All through the garden. 'Twas these very trees
That we were passing, and thou toldest me
The name and kind of each, and gavest me
Thirteen pear trees, ten apple trees, and figs
Two score ; and fifty rows of vines as well
Thou namedst as the ones which I should have,
Whereof each row ripened successively,
Bearing all sorts of clusters, whensoever
Zeus' seasons from above weighed down on them.'

E'en as he spake, his father's knees and heart
Were loosed, to recognise the certain signs
Odysseus told him ; and he cast his arms
Round his dear son, and steadfast good Odysseus
Caught up his father fainting unto him.
But when his breath came back, and sense revived,
He made reply once more :

' O Father Zeus, in truth ye gods are yet
On high Olympus, if indeed the suitors
Have paid for their infatuate insolence !
But now my heart is terribly alarmed
Lest all the men of Ithaca in haste
Attack us here, and send their messengers
To all the towns of Cephallenia.'

Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
' Be of good cheer, nor let thy heart be troubled

On this account. But let us to the house
Which lies near by this garden. There I sent
Telemachus, the neatherd and swineherd
Ahead, to hasten and make dinner ready.'

So talking to the goodly house they came.
And when they reached the well-set house, they found
Telemachus, the neatherd and the swineherd
Carving much meat and mixing the bright wine.

Meanwhile the old Sicilian servant bathed
Great-souled Laertes in his room, and rubbed him
With olive oil. Then came Athene nigh
The shepherd of the people, and filled out
His limbs, and made him taller than before
And mightier to see. Forth from the bath
He came; and his own son was stupified,
To see him like the deathless gods in presence;
And unto him with wingéd words he said:

'O father, of a truth one of the gods
Who live for evermore hath made thee seem
Taller and goodlier.'

Then wise Laertes answered him and said:
'Ah Father Zeus, Athene and Apollo,
Would that in the same strength as when I took
The well-built citadel of Nericus
Upon the mainland shore, when I was king
In Cephallenia,—would in that strength
I yesterday had been in mine own house,
With harness on my back, to stand beside thee
And keep the suitors off! for then would I
Have loosed the knees of many a man of them
Indoors, and glad thy heart had been within thee.'

So they two with each other held converse.
But when the other three had done their task
And made the dinner ready, they sate down
In order on the chairs and seats. And as

They were about to set their hands to food,
Came near the old man Dolius, and with him
His sons, fatigued from labour ; for their mother,
The old Sicilian woman, had gone forth
And called them back, the same who used to get
Their meals, and kindly tended the old man,
Now that old age had hold of him. And they,
When they beheld and recognised Odysseus,
Stood stock-still with amazement. But Odysseus
With gentle words spake unto them, and said :

‘ Old man, sit down to dinner ; and do ye
Forget your wonder. We have long been wanting
To put our hands unto the food, as we
Waited indoors, alway expecting you.’

So said he, but with both his hands spread out
Ran Dolius straight to him, and clasped his hand
And kissed it on the wrist ; and then he spake
With wingéd words to him :

‘ Dear master, since thou art come back to us,
Who sorely longed but never thought to see thee
And ’tis the gods have brought thee—hail to thee
And hearty welcome, and all happiness
May the gods give thee ! Also tell me this
For certain, and assure me. Does she know
This yet—the wise Penelope—that thou
Art come again, or shall we send to tell her ? ’

‘ Then deep Odysseus answered him and said :
‘ Old man, she knows already. Why shouldst thou
Trouble thyself therewith ? ’

So said he, and the other took his seat
Upon a polished stool. So too the sons
Of Dolius came about renowned Odysseus,
And greeted him in speech and clasped his hands,
And then sate down in order by their father.

So they were busied with their meal indoors.

But meanwhile through the city every way
Rumour the messenger went swiftly, telling
Of the grim death and ending of the suitors.
And when they heard, at once the people gathered
With moans and wails before Odysseus' house.
Forth from the house they bore each one his dead
And buried them ; and those from other cities
They put on speedy ships, and sent them off
With fisher-folk, to bear each to his home.
Then they themselves went crowding to the assembly
In grief of heart ; and when they were assembled
And met together, then Eupéithes rose
And spake among them, for upon his heart
Lay sorrow for his son, beyond remede,
E'en for Antinous, the first man slain
By good Odysseus. Shedding tears for him
He made his speech and said :

‘ Friends, ’tis a very fearful deed this man
Has planned against the Achæans ! some he led
Forth in his ships, yea, many men and good ;
And he hath lost his hollow ships ; and lost
His men still more ; and now comes home and slays
Others, the very pick of Cephallenia.
Be off ! before this fellow gets away
Quickly to Pylos, or to holy Elis,
Where the Epeians rule ; or e'en hereafter
Shall we be ashamed for ever ; for 'twill be
A stain for even men unborn to hear of,
If we do not take vengeance upon those
Who slew our sons and brothers. As for me,
Life would be sweet no longer, but I rather
Would die at once, and be among the dead.
But come now, lest they be too quick for us
And get across the sea.’

So said he, weeping, and compassion seized

All the Achæans. Then came near to them
The holy minstrel from Odysseus' halls
With Medon, both of them released from sleep ;
And in the midst they stood ; and wonder fell
On every man. Then Medon wise of heart
Spake in their midst and said :

‘ Hark now to me, ye men of Ithaca !
Not in the teeth of the immortal gods
These deeds Odysseus planned. No, I myself
Had sight of some immortal, who stood close
Beside him, and seemed wholly like to Mentor.
Now was he manifest a god immortal,
Protecting and encouraging Odysseus,
Now was he storming through the hall, and scaring
The suitors, who were falling thick and fast.’

So said he, and pale fear seized on them all.
Then ’mid them spake the old lord Halitherses,
The son of Mastor ; who alone could see
The past and future ; with good will to them
He made his speech and said :

‘ Hark now to me, ye men of Ithaca,
And what I say ! Through your own cowardice
These things have happened, friends. Ye would not listen
To me nor Mentor, shepherd of the people,
To make your sons cease from their foolish ways,
Who in their blind and evil wantonness
Wrought a great scandal, wasting his possessions
And honouring not the bedmate of a prince,
Who, so they thought, would never more come back.
Now then, let it be thus ; list to the words
I speak, and go we not against him, lest
Some one may come on self-invited evil.’

So said he ; but they leapt up with loud cries,
More than the half of them—the rest remained
Assembled there—because his word was not

Unto their mind, but they were for Eupheithes,
And there and then ran quickly to their arms.
So when they had clad themselves in gleaming mail,
They gathered thick outside the spacious town,
And in his foolishness Eupheithes led them,
Because he thought to avenge his slaughtered son ;
Yet was he fated never to return
But there to meet his doom.

Now spake Athene unto Zeus Cronion :
' O Father, son of Cronos, lord of lords,
Tell me, who ask, what purpose lies concealed
Within thy mind. Wilt thou yet further bring
Fierce war to pass and dreadful din of battle,
Or set up friendship 'twixt them both again ? '

Then Zeus who rolls the clouds replied to her :
' My child, why ask and question me like this ?
Nay, didst not thou devise this scheme thyself,
That in good deed Odysseus when he came
Should be avenged on these men ? As thou wilt !
But I will tell thee of the better way.
Now that the good Odysseus has requited
The suitors, let them swear a solemn oath
Of peace ; let him be king for all his days,
And we contrive that they forget the slaying
Of sons and brothers ; so may either party
Be friendly to the other as of old,
And there be peace and plenty in abundance.'

His words aroused Athene, who already
Was keen to go ; and with a rush she sped
Down from Olympus' peaks.

Now when their appetite for the sweet food
Was satisfied, that steadfast goodly man
Odysseus, was the first to say to them :
' Let some one go outside, and see if they
Are not now drawing near.'

At that a son of Dolius went out
As he desired, and stood upon the threshold,
And saw them all no long way off, and called
Unto Odysseus swift with wingéd words :
' Here close at hand they are ! quick, let us arm ! '

At that they started up and donned their armour.
Odysseus and his men made four ; and he
Could count on the six sons of Dolius ;
And with them Dolius and Laertes armed,
For all their grey hairs, fighting-men perforce.
And when they had clad themselves in gleaming mail,
They threw the doors wide open and went forth,
Odysseus leading them.

Then near them came Athene, child of Zeus,
In Mentor's image, both to eye and ear :
And gladdened was the steadfast good Odysseus
At sight of her, and to Telemachus
His son he spake :

' Telemachus, now shalt thou learn this lesson—
Now thou art come unto the place of battle
Where 'tis the best men who try out the issue—
Not to bring shame upon thy father's house,
On us who have been always excellent
In might and valour over all the earth.'

And wise Telemachus replied to him :
' Dear father, thou shalt see me if thou wilt,
As I am purposed now, bringing no shame
Upon thy line according to thy word.'

He spake ; and glad Laertes was, and said :
' Dear gods, what a good day this is for me !
It makes me very happy, that in valour
My son and my son's son vie with each other.'

Then at his side keen-eyed Athene spake :
' Son of Arceisius, the dearest far
Of all my friends, pray first to Zeus the Father

And to his keen eyed maiden, and then swing
Thy long spear back, and make a cast forthwith.'

Therewith Pallas Athene breathed in him
Great strength. He prayed the child of mighty Zeus,
And quickly swung and cast his long-limbed spear,
And smote Eueithes through his bronze-cheeked helmet.
It failed to stop the spear, which went clean through ;
And with a crash he fell and on his body
His armour clanged. Then with his glorious son
Odysseus fell upon the foremost ranks
Attacking them with double-headed spears
And swords ; and now would they have slain them all,
And cut off their return, had not Athene,
The maid of ægis-bearing Zeus, called out
And halted all the host :

' Hold, men of Ithaca, from bitter fighting,
That without bloodshed ye may part at once ! '

So said she ; and pale fear gat hold of them ;
And in their terror from their hands the arms
Flew and all fell to earth, e'en as the goddess
Uttered her voice. Toward the town they turned
Eager to save their lives. Then terribly
The steadfast good Odysseus roared aloud,
And with a spring like a high-flying eagle
He swooped upon them. But that very instant
The son of Cronos launched a smoky bolt,
Which fell before the keen-eyed goddess' feet,
The daughter of the mighty sire ; whereat
Keen-eyed Athene spake unto Odysseus :

' Son of Laertes, of the seed of Zeus,
Subtle Odysseus, hold thy hand and stay
The strife of even-balanced war, lest Zeus,
Whose voice is heard afar, the son of Cronos,
Haply be wroth with thee.'

She spake ; and he obeyed her, glad at heart.

Then for all time Pallas Athene made
A covenant of peace betwixt both sides,
She that is child of ægis-bearing Zeus,
In Mentor's image, both to eye and ear.

THE END